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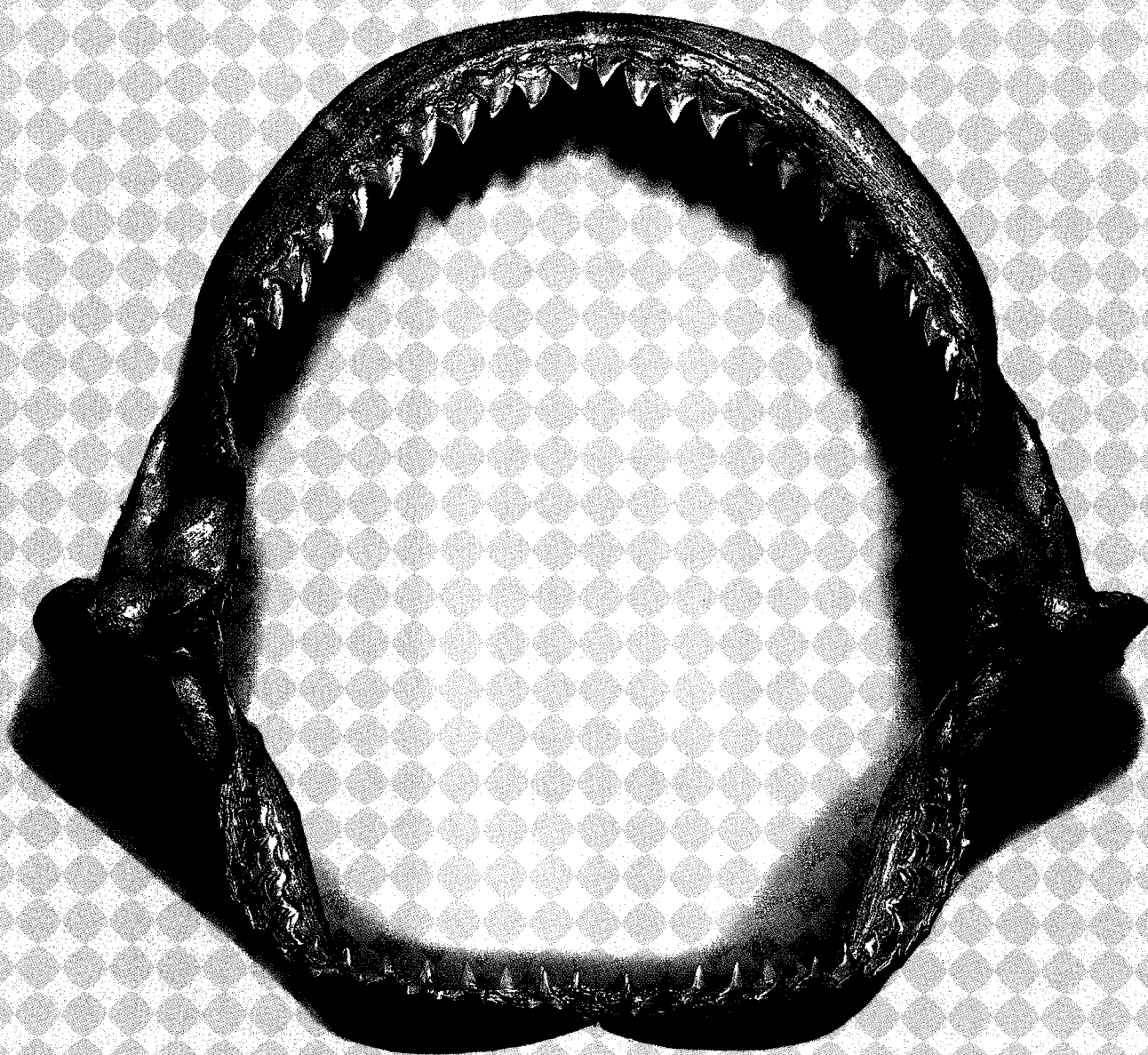




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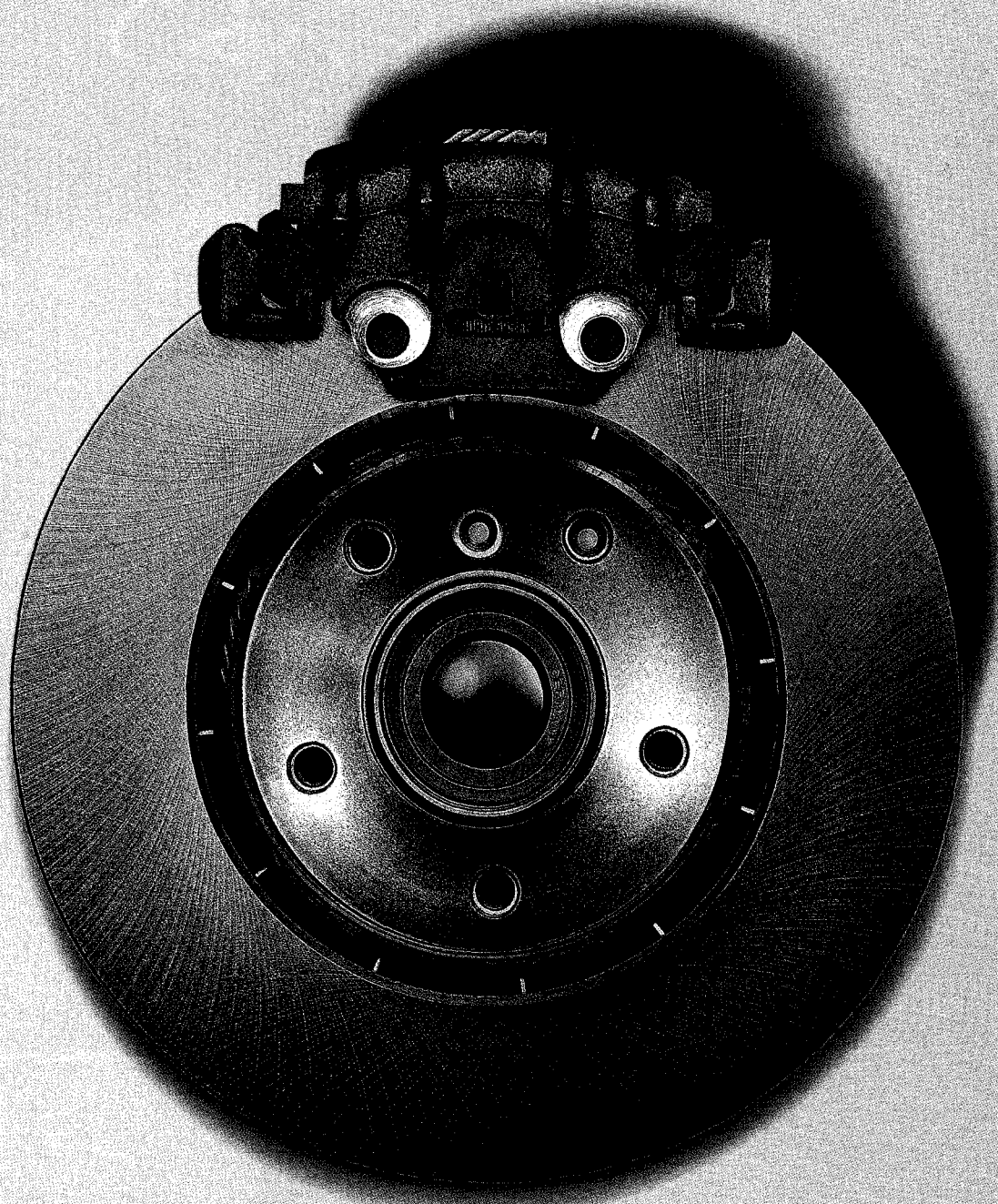


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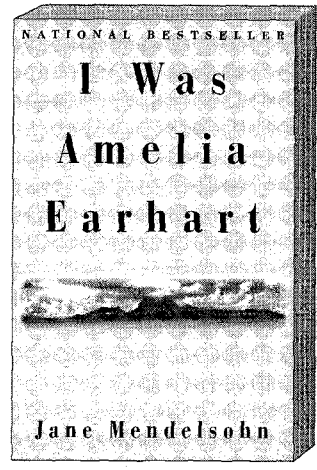
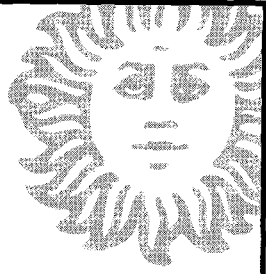
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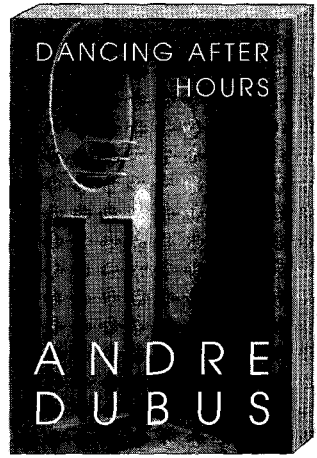


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# THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 17, 1997

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## GET UNREAL

*Paul Newman isn't Hud, thank God.*

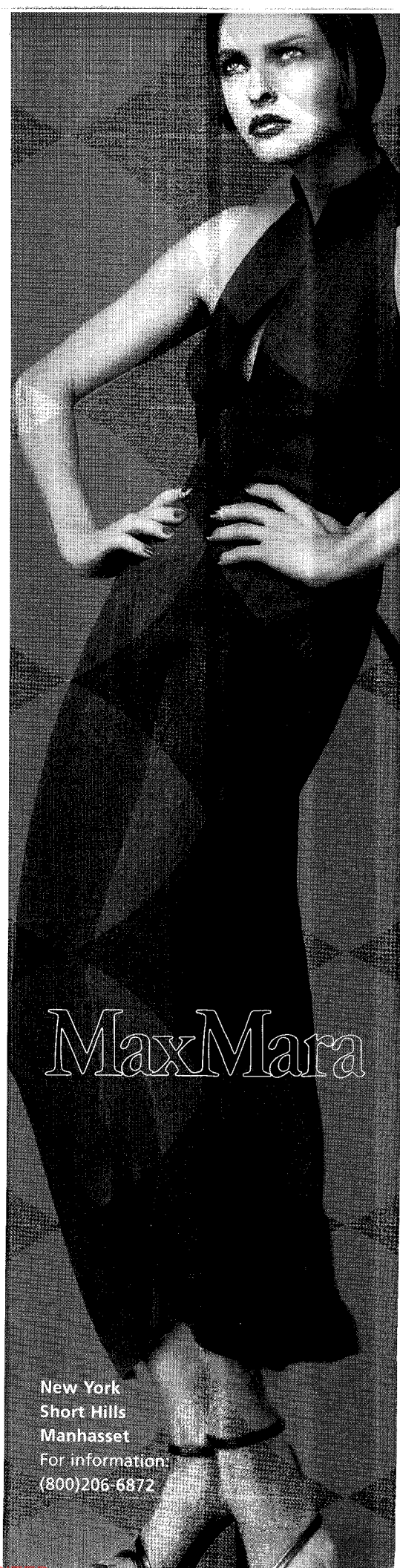
IN 1946, the French film theorist André Bazin claimed that the people who invented the movies were possessed by a vision: they saw in film a medium that would one day be capable of producing a flawless representation of reality. Bazin called this vision "the myth of total cinema," and he predicted that, just as film in its history to 1946 had added sound and color, it would continue to search for new techniques for making ever more lifelike reproductions of the world. He has not been wrong yet. People experimenting with high-definition television, or HDTV—the technology that will one day transmit preternaturally vivid pictures to your television set—report that the resolution of the image is such that details invisible on ordinary television screens, like scuff marks on the anchorperson's desk or hasty brushwork on the painting used as a backdrop, leap out at you on HDTV. The *Times* predicted the other day that television production designers, formerly accustomed to tacking a studio set together out of plywood and duct tape, will have to start building the real thing. On standard television, mahogany stain looks like mahogany. On HDTV, it looks like stain. To maintain a realistic

image, in other words, television will have to construct a better reality. The simulation is getting ahead of the simulated.

Which raises the question of what we think this technology is going to do for us. There is, of course, the crass explanation, which is that HDTV will be good for the television industry in the same way that the compact disk was once good for the music industry: it will generate huge short-term replacement revenue. In the case of the music industry, the rationale for persuading people to ditch their phonographs and LPs and replace them with CD equipment was that digital CD sound was more lifelike than the analog sound of the old LPs. Actually, there was nothing wrong with analog sound. The ear learned to block out the occasional hiss and pop, and found the result adequately lifelike. You do not, after all, listen to live music in a soundproof chamber. There is usually someone in the next row unwrapping a mint. Once CDs became the standard, though, *they* became "lifelike," and analog recordings started sounding wobbly and staticky. The same thing is likely to happen with television. Today, the low-resolution image of Dan Rather's face is as vivid as you can dream

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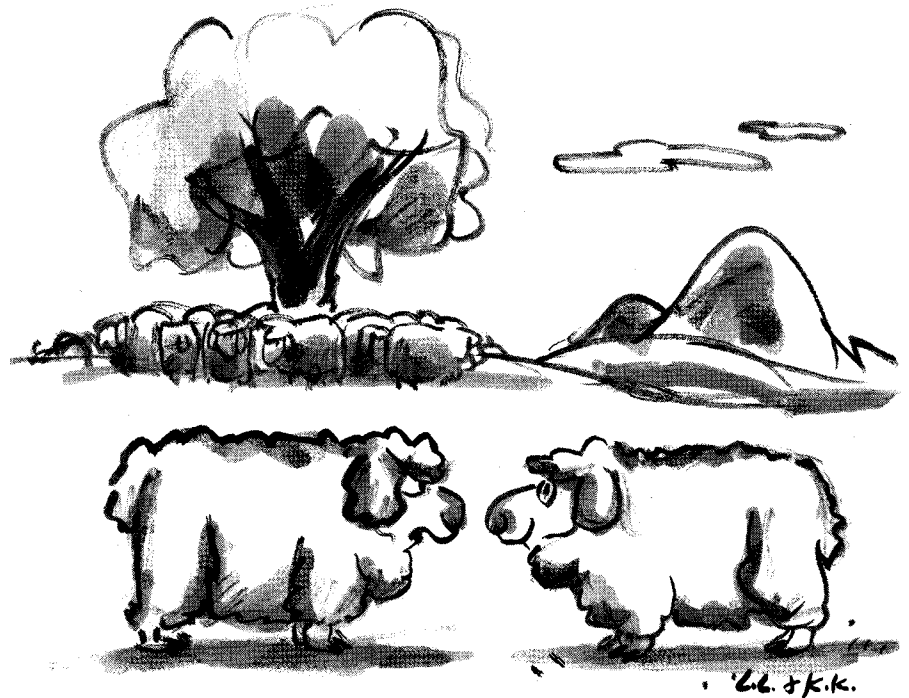
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"Ewe again?"

you would ever wish it to be. Tomorrow, it will seem a primitive blur. You will become familiar with his very pores. (Low-resolution, by the way, is kind to aging features. One imagines that television careers will be a good deal shorter in the high-definition future—another bonus that no one has figured on.)

However resolute, though, the HDTV image still won't be Dan Rather. We won't be *smelling* Dan Rather. We won't be able to get up from our couches and *walk around* Dan Rather. Eventually, the high-definition image will come to be like the telephone: once a miracle of rare device, now the most banal and annoying instrument in your home. High-definition Dan will still be just a picture in a box. By then, we'll want a virtual Dan we can interact with. "Human kind cannot bear very much reality," says the little bird in T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets." Point taken; but hyperreality is something we can't seem to get enough of.

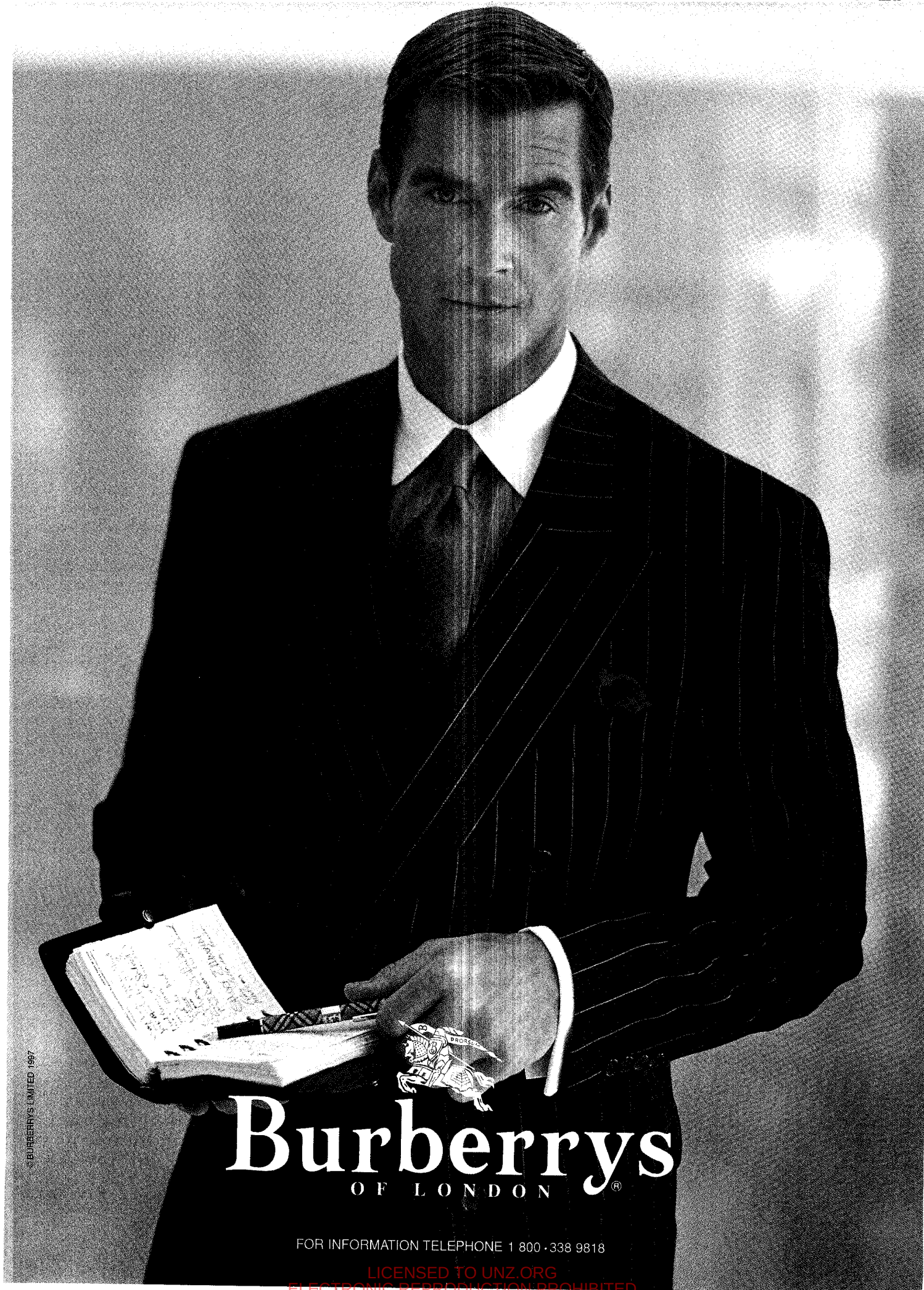
The craving for more and more realistic representations of reality is at bottom an aesthetic craving, and one that people are perfectly capable of indulging purely for its own sake—an indulgence beautifully illustrated by the tremendous expense and effort being invested in getting a computer image to look and function exactly like a piece of paper. But the effort to satisfy such

cravings kind of misses the point of what the true pleasure of a representation is. The true pleasure of a representation does not come from its indistinguishability from the real thing. It comes from its distinguishability. An Elvis impersonator gives pleasure precisely because he's not Elvis, and it is crucial to the effect that we never forget he's not. The moment we mistake him for Elvis, the frisson is lost.

"Art is illusion," people say, but they say only the half of it. A perfect illusion would be interchangeable with reality, and no more interesting than reality. "Paul Newman *Is* Hud," the old movie posters used to boast. The point, though, was that he isn't. The trend toward perfect lifelikeness seems like a trend away from artificiality. But is that really what people want? A public debate recently took place over whether white actors can play black characters, and vice versa. The language of the debate was the language of truth and authenticity—where those qualities reside and how they can be most validly expressed. But to talk this way is to talk as though the best person to play King Lear would be King Lear. Who would go to see that? The theatre isn't about truth and authenticity. It's about pretending. That's why we go to it. For truth and authenticity, we have the subway.

—LOUIS MENAND





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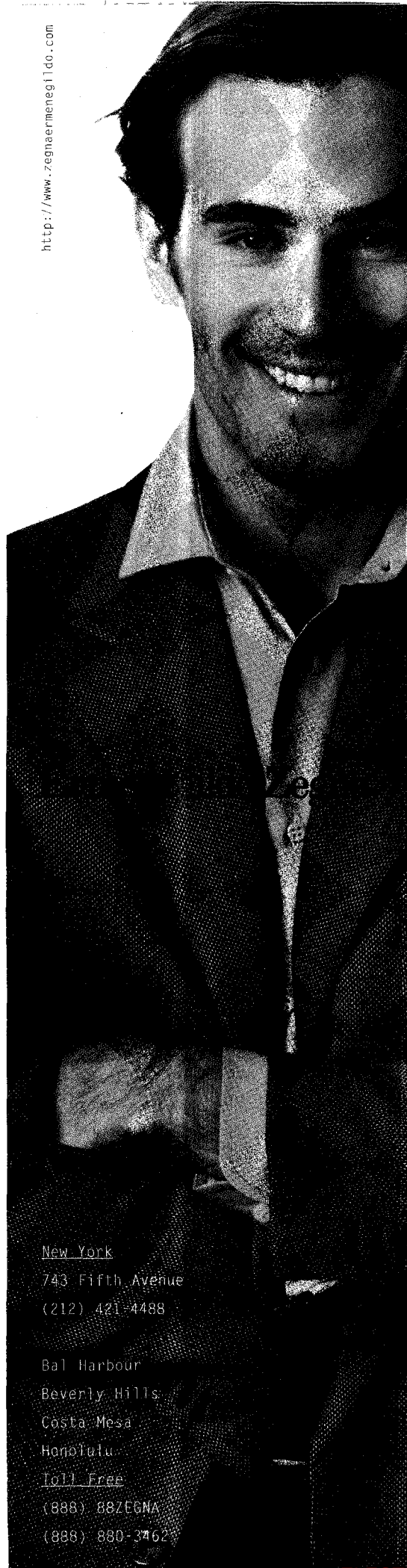
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## THE MAIL



### IMMORAL JUSTICE

As a family member of three murder victims, I was appalled by Alex Kozinski's glib assertion that murderers should be executed because "we tarnish the memory of the dead and heap needless misery on their surviving families by letting the perpetrators live" ("Tinkering with Death," February 10th). When my beloved sister, Nancy Bishop Langert, was three months pregnant with a desperately wanted child, her killer shot her in the abdomen and left her to bleed to death in her basement. She had been forced to watch the murderer literally blow her husband's brains out before the gun was turned on her. Too weak to call for help, she drew in her own blood a heart and the letter "u"—for "love you"—then died.

Kozinski claims that he votes for death because he hears "the tortured voices of the victims crying out" for "vindication." My sister's last word on her life was "love." Another killing would not vindicate her; it would contradict everything she stood for. For that reason, I am not miserable because her killer was sentenced to life without parole instead of to death, as Kozinski contends that I should be. Now I have nothing in common with the murderer—I am not a deliberate taker of human life.

JEANNE E. BISHOP  
Chicago, Ill.

I was struck by Judge Kozinski's statement that reading about the horrific crimes of death-row inmates erased any doubts he had about sentencing convicted murderers to death. I had a very different epiphany. I had been equivocal about the death penalty, but then I was a juror in a first-degree-murder trial. That experience taught me that a world of difference exists between determining guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and being absolutely confident, to a moral certainty, that someone is guilty. Kozinski writes that he dreads the day he finds out that an innocent man has been con-

victed, but there is simply no way under our current legal system to insure that this won't happen.

GAIL COOPER  
Oakland, Calif.

The tendency to sentimentalize crime and criminals often accompanies arguments about the death penalty. Judge Kozinski exposes us to a less familiar but equal distortion—idealizing the level of scrutiny that courts are able to give cases in which the death penalty has been invoked. Incredibly, he believes that such cases are "meticulously litigated," ignoring the vast body of literature that documents how often indifferent, lazy, or totally inexperienced lawyers are appointed to represent the poor and how frequently juries never learn that they are condemning, in the words of one capital-punishment scholar, people with "debilitating mental impairments, minimal intelligence and poor legal representation." Kozinski's own candor makes clear how the imperfections of judges affect death-penalty decisions. With an execution approaching, he confers with another judge, and when that judge votes for a delay Kozinski "almost instinctively" takes the opposing view. All too human, perhaps, but no way, legal or moral, to approach a choice between life and death.

MICHAEL MELTSNER  
Matthews Distinguished University Professor of Law  
Northeastern University  
Boston, Mass.

Judge Kozinski is at once silly and insulting to suggest that Supreme Court Justices William J. Brennan, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall violated their judicial oath and committed a "shameful breach of duty" by steadfastly maintaining that the death penalty is an uncivilized and inhumane punishment, inconsistent with the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Justices were not "refusing to enforce a valid law" but, rather, were discharging their duty of interpreting the Constitution as they saw it. Kozinski's charge might be defensible if it were levelled at a lower-court judge such as he himself is, but the Justices of the Supreme Court are not inexorably bound by the Court's existing precedent; they must be free to diverge from it (albeit cautiously) in order to correct their course when necessary.

STEVE KRONE  
Beverly Hills, Calif.





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Alex Kozinski argues that, although he personally lacks the courage to witness an execution, "society is entitled to take the life of those who have shown utter contempt for the lives of others." But is it really? Without question, those who kill forfeit their right to live among us. But not their right to live. Among all Western nations, only the United States has failed to learn the lesson that a society that kills its killers has become just a bit more like them.

JONATHAN M. GOLDSTEIN  
New York City

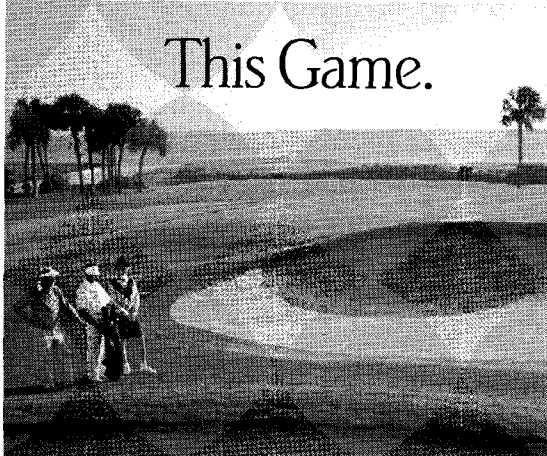
### NOT A ROMAN HOLIDAY

By placing the elder Pliny among "tourists of a particularly foolhardy sort" because he sailed toward Vesuvius while it was erupting ("Getting to Know the Volcano," February 17th), Wade Graham does injustice to a man of genius and courage. The polymath Pliny was commanding the Roman fleet at Misenum, some miles across the gulf from Vesuvius. At the appearance of the volcanic cloud, his nephew recounted in a letter to Tacitus, Pliny called for a boat in order to make "closer inspection." At the moment of departure, he received a frantic message from a friend living on the Vesuvian shore, "imploring rescue"—which was by then possible only by sea. His nephew tells us, "What he had begun in a spirit of inquiry, he completed as a hero. He ordered that the quadriremes be launched, and went on board with the intention of bringing aid to many people." Under a hail of flaming rubble, Pliny went ashore at Stabiae to rally the desperate householders. It was there, on the beach, that he died of asphyxiation.

Had Pliny persisted in his original intention merely to observe, his small boat would not have entered the turbulent zone of volcanic hail. I cannot imagine why an exemplary act, in which a brave man perished, should be reduced to "a lust to see destructiveness."

SHIRLEY HAZZARD  
New York City

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# ST. JOHN

BY MARIE GRAY

*a c c e s s o r i e s*

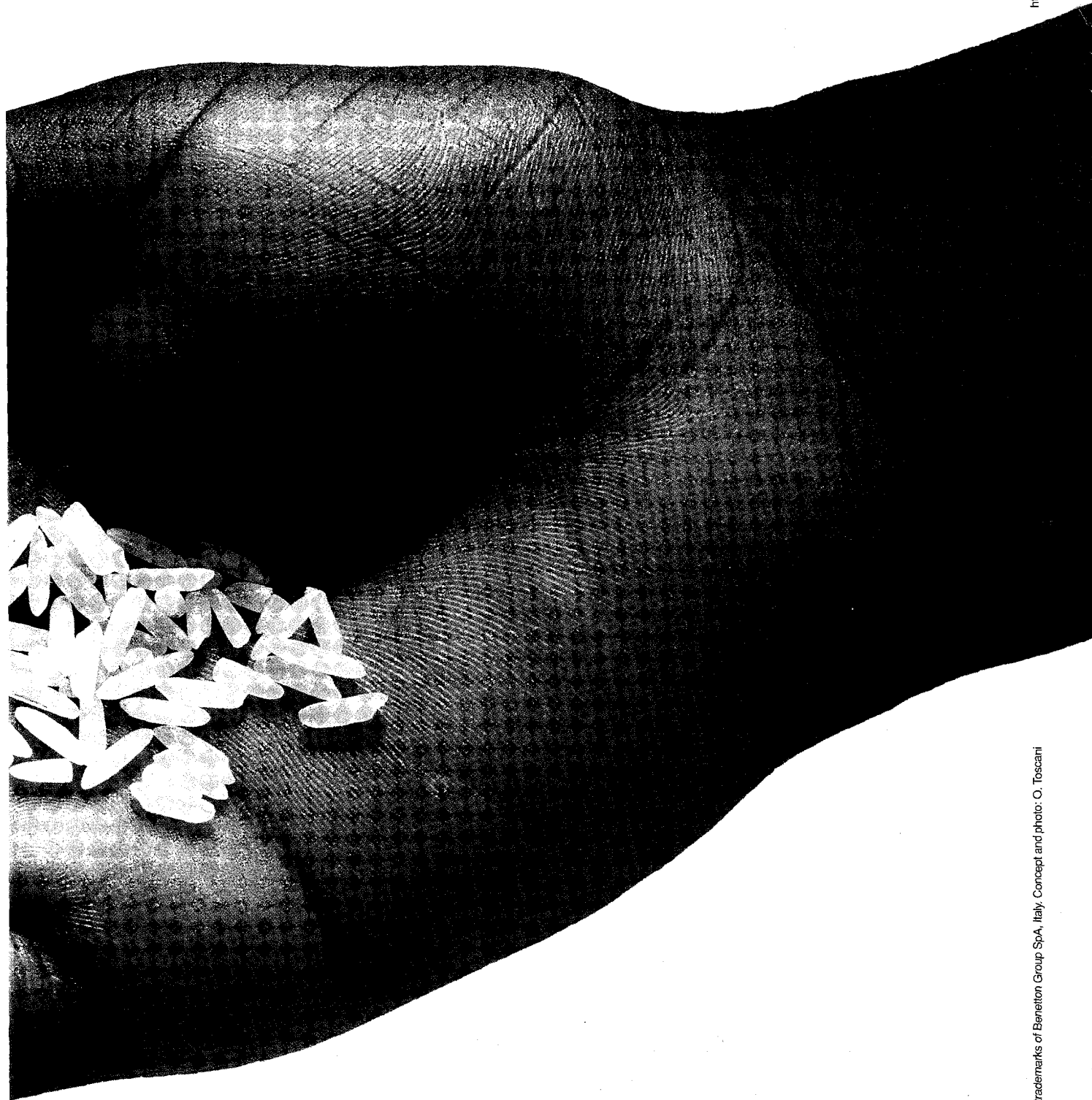
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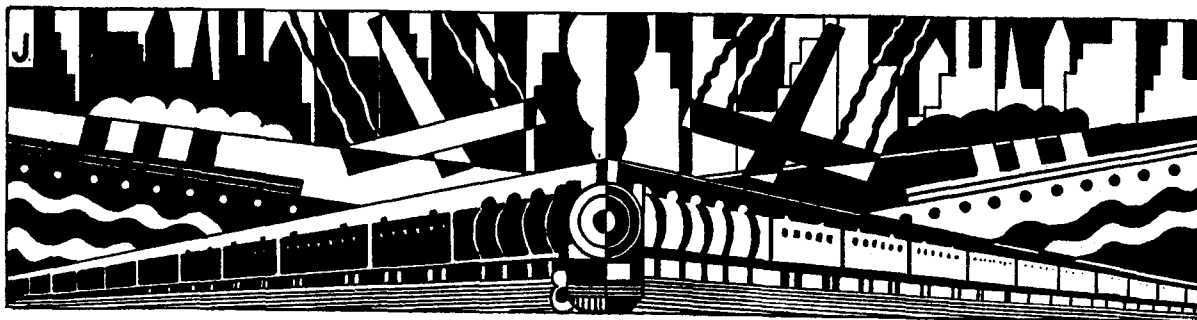




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## THE THEATRE

### OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

**ANNIE**—Twenty years later, and she still doesn't look a day over eleven. With Nell Carter as Miss Hannigan, Conrad John Shuck as Daddy Warbucks, and Brittney Kissinger in the title role. Directed by Martin Charnin, who also wrote the lyrics; book by Thomas Meehan, music by Charles Strouse. Previews begin March 14. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**—Vanessa Redgrave is the director of this New York Shakespeare Festival staging, in which she co-stars with David Harewood. Two previews on March 12. Opens March 13 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

**BARRYMORE**—Christopher Plummer depicts the legendary actor in a new play written by William Luce and directed by Gene Saks. Previews begin March 14. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**BUNNY BUNNY**—A comedy by Alan Zweibel, one of the original "Saturday Night Live" writers, about his fourteen-year friendship with Gilda Radner, starring Bruno Kirby and Paula Cale. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

**DEALER'S CHOICE**—Manhattan Theater Club presents Patrick Marber's comedy, set during a poker game in a London restaurant. Directed by John Tilling. Previews begin March 18. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**DREAM**—Lesley Ann Warren, John Pizzarelli, and Margaret Whitling lead the cast in a celebration of the songs of Johnny Mercer. Directed and choreographed by Wayne Cilento. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**GOD'S HEART**—Joe Mantello is the director of a new play by Craig Lucas, in which a group of eight Americans connects in spite of (rather than through) their faxes, phones, and computers. The cast includes Viola Davis, John Benjamin Hickey, and Julie Kavner. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

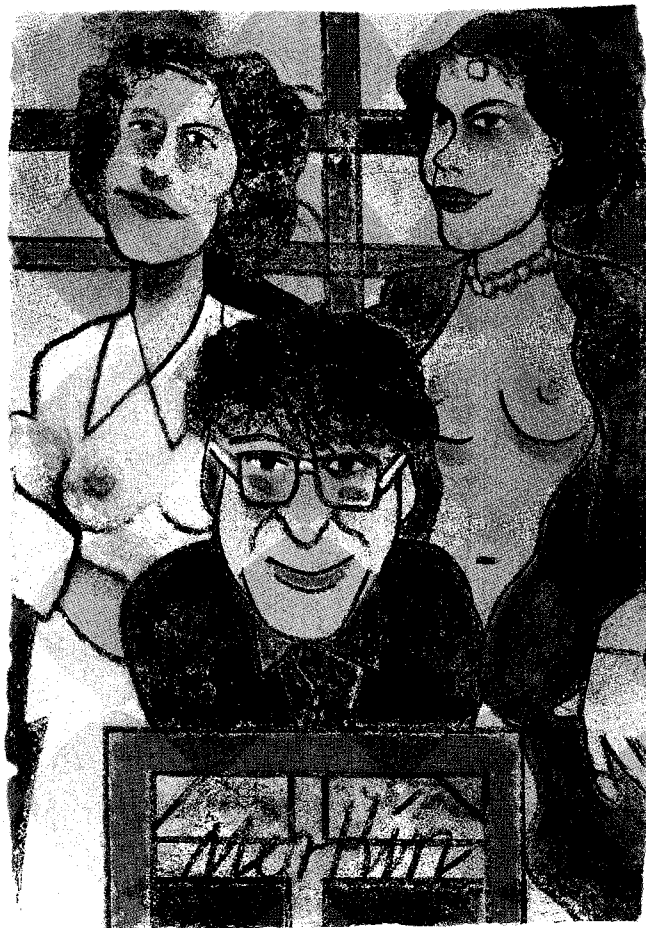
**GOLEM**—The Czechoslovak American Marionette Theatre's version of the Jewish folk tale

## GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 |    |    |    |    |

incorporates choreography (by Yoshiko Chuma) and music (by Frank London, of the Klezmatics). March 13-15 at 7:30 and March 16 at 3. Continues through March 23. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

**THE GREEN HEART**—Charles Busch (book) and Rusty Magee (music and lyrics) have joined forces on this comic thriller, a musical adaptation of Jack Ritchie's short story about a broke playboy with dark designs on a rich botanist. In previews. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)



Deborah Findlay, Antony Sher, and Anna Chancellor, in "Stanley."

**THE GUARDSMAN**—The Hungarian-born playwright Ferenc Molnár's 1924 drama about the romantic machinations of a Viennese actor and his actress wife. Presented by the Pearl Theatre Company. Previews begin March 14. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

**HEDWIG & THE ANGRY INCH**—John Cameron Mitchell wrote and has the title role in this piece about a German Cold War bride turned rock singer; the band Cheater provides the music. In previews through March 16. Opens March 18 at 8:30 and continues through March 31. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

**HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE**—A young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) growing up in the sixties and seventies gets behind-the-wheel lessons in life from her uncle (David Morse), in Paula Vogel's new play. Mark Brokaw is the director. In previews through March 15. Opens March 16 at 7:30. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

**MINOR DEMONS**—A big-time lawyer who returns to his small home town clashes with childhood friends when he is hired to defend a sixteen-year-old murder suspect. In previews through March 15. Opens March 16 at 7:30. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

**NAMES**—Mark Kemple's drama, set in 1952, about Group Theatre members under attack by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Two previews on March 12. Opens March 13 at 8 and continues through March 31. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

**PLAY ON!**—A female songwriter leaves the South for Harlem, in a musical the playwright Cheryl L. West has based on "Twelfth Night." Directed by Sheldon Epps, with choreography by Mercedes Ellington; the songs are by Duke Ellington. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

**TAP DOGS**—Australia's work-booted tap troupe brings its North American tour to New York. In previews through March 15. Opens March 16 at 7. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

**THE YOUNG MAN FROM ATLANTA**—Rip Torn and Shirley Knight star in Horton Foote's 1995 drama, set in Houston in the nineteen-fifties, about a couple living in the aftermath of their only child's death. Robert Falls is the director. Previews begin March 13. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

### OPENED RECENTLY

**BEAT: A SUBWAY COP'S COMEDY**—John DiResta, New York City transit policeman and standup comic, files a report on his subterranean workplace. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**THE BEEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER**—In Karen Malpede's latest drama, a poet's quiet island retreat is disrupted by a visit from his social-activist daughter. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF WHITE MUSIC**—A comic revue by Dee Dee Thomas and David Tweedy, in which an all-black cast interprets the music of Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and other honkies. (Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

**CAPITOL STEPS**—A political revue performed by a troupe of former Congressional staff members. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

**THE CHANGELING**—Director Robert Woodruff has turned Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's Jacobean tragedy about the desperation

RICHARD MERKIN



# TASTE OF NEW YORK:

## Visa's Preferred Guide to Dining

By Susan Breslow Sardone

As part of an ongoing restaurant review program from *The New Yorker* and Visa, everytime you charge a meal with your Visa® card at any of the participating restaurants in this and all upcoming *Taste of New York* features, you'll also contribute to helping Citymeals-on-Wheels feed the homebound elderly.\* The following are among the many restaurants engaged in this worthwhile effort.

**ARQUA • 281 Church Street • 212-334-1888** Ten years of serving consistently good Northern Italian food have made family-owned Arqua a neighborhood favorite. Minimally but stylishly decorated, the room is warmed by soft lighting and stippled, peach-colored walls. Chef-owner Leonardo Pulito's inventive touch yields Venetian specialties notable for their freshness, simplicity, and flavor. From the classic focaccia to hearty pasta to the biscotti and gelati, everything is created in-house. For an auspicious beginning, sample *sardine in saora* (fresh pickled sardines). Unique pasta dishes include artichoke lasagna, butternut squash-filled ravioli, papardelle in duck sauce, and light *gnocchi alla padovana*. Still hungry? Main courses offer fish, rabbit, lamb, veal, and venison delights. Last week, the restaurant began Sunday brunch service.

**CAPSOUTO FRÈRES • 451 Washington Street • 212-966-4900** In a renovated landmark TriBeCa building, the brothers Capsouto opened this romantic and unpretentious trendsetter in 1980. With its red-brick walls, old-fashioned wooden bar, lace curtains, fresh flowers, and dependably fine food and service, it continues to charm. Chef Charles Tutino turns out French cuisine with a modern flair. If you haven't savored escargots maison in garlic butter for awhile, revisit the pleasure here. Perhaps the basil-cured gravlax will tempt you. Classic entrées include steak au poivre, pan-roasted pheasant, poached salmon with a warm, fresh herb vinaigrette, and tender roast duckling with a ginger and black currant sauce. To avoid the wait, order your chocolate, raspberry, or praline dessert soufflé when you select your entrée.



Bistro charmer Capsouto Frères in TriBeCa.

### HUDSON RIVER CLUB • 4 World Financial Center •

**212-786-1500** Overlooking Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, the deluxe Hudson River Club scores a dining trifecta with winning food, service, and views. Hudson River School paintings and banquettes line its discreet, three-tiered main dining room. Chef Jim Porteus' imaginative upstate cuisine translates into slow-cooked game, grilled freshwater fish, and inspired dessert confections accompanied by regional wines.



Hudson River Club's signature seared filet of salmon in a potato and leek shell.

Sautéed Catskill mountain trout and roasted aged pheasant with Riesling wine sauce and cranberries also please gourmets. Come spring, house-cured venison prosciutto with smoked venison salad joins the menu, along with roasted red snapper and lobster risotto. The Statue of Liberty dessert features chocolate savories; a tower of chocolate stacks up to mousse, meringue, and brownie bliss.

### TRIBECA GRILL • 375 Greenwich Street •

**212-941-3900** Once the Martinson coffee warehouse in a lonely, industrial part of the city, the Tribeca Grill has become a critical part of the cobblestoned area's transformation into cultural hub. A long mahogany bar takes center stage in the high-ceilinged room that displays paintings by the late Robert DeNiro Sr. Patrons do more than their share of celebrity-spotting when DeNiro Jr., Bill Murray, Sean Penn, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and other backers drop by to check on their investment. Diners put their money on chef Don Pintabona's grilled and sautéed selections influenced by Italian, French, Asian, and West Coast cuisine. Specialties include rare seared tuna with sesame noodles and ravioli stuffed with butternut squash—well worth the cab fare to this informal and welcoming spot.

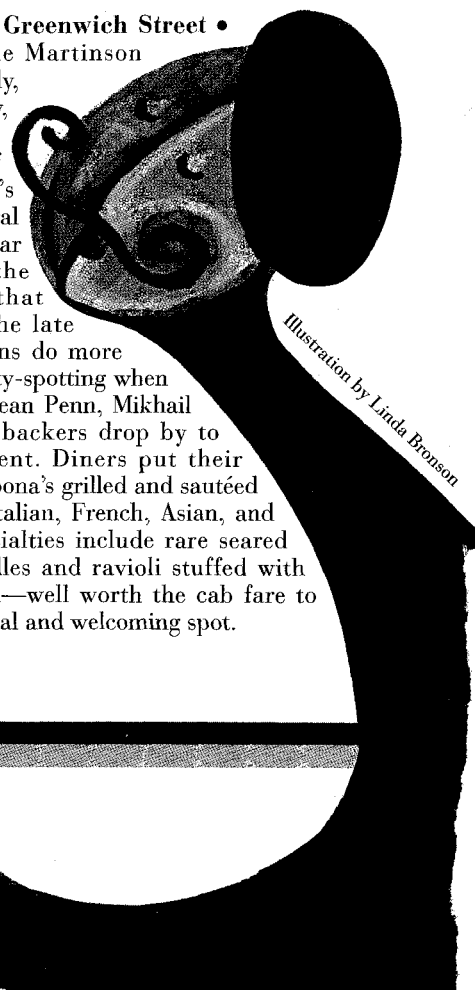


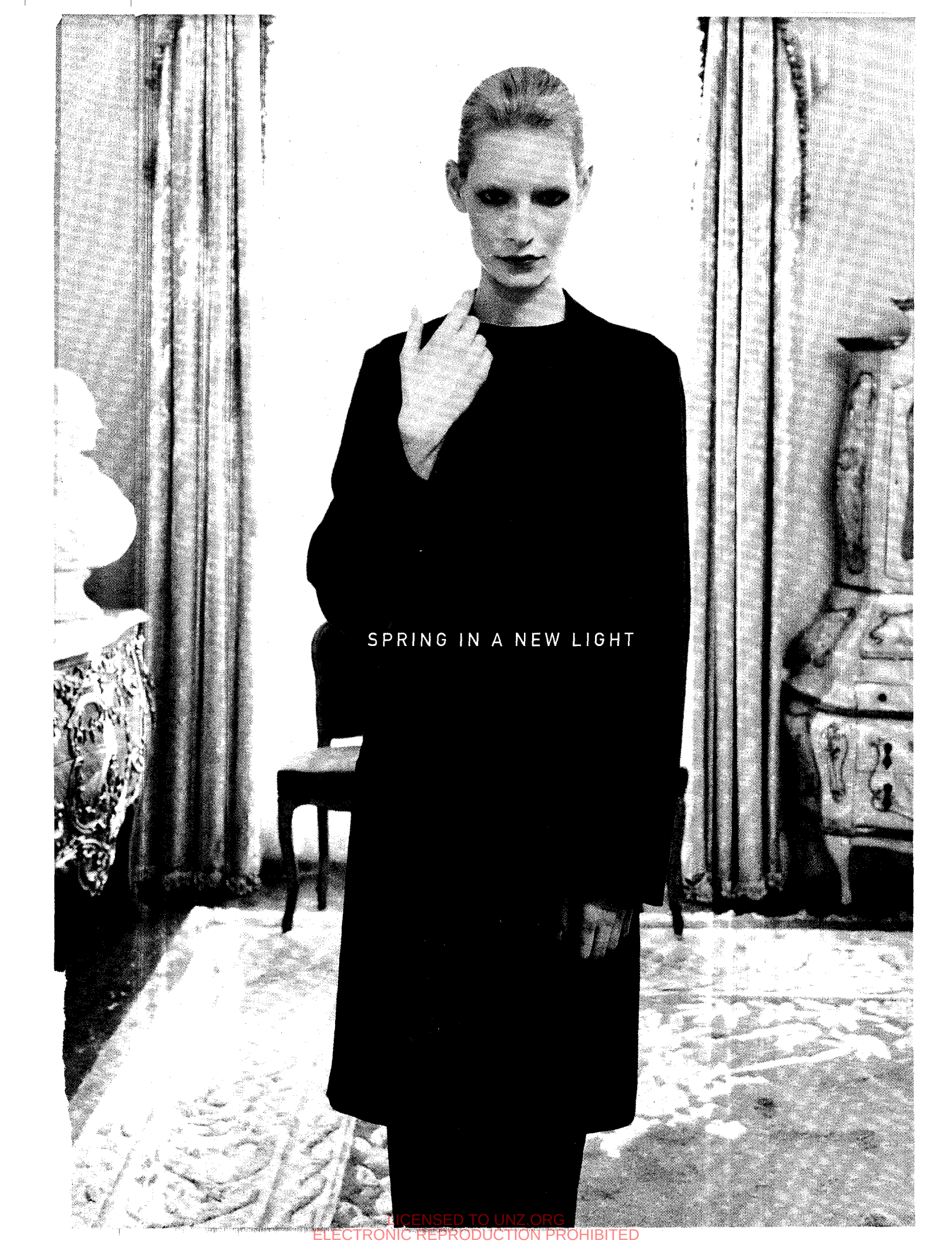
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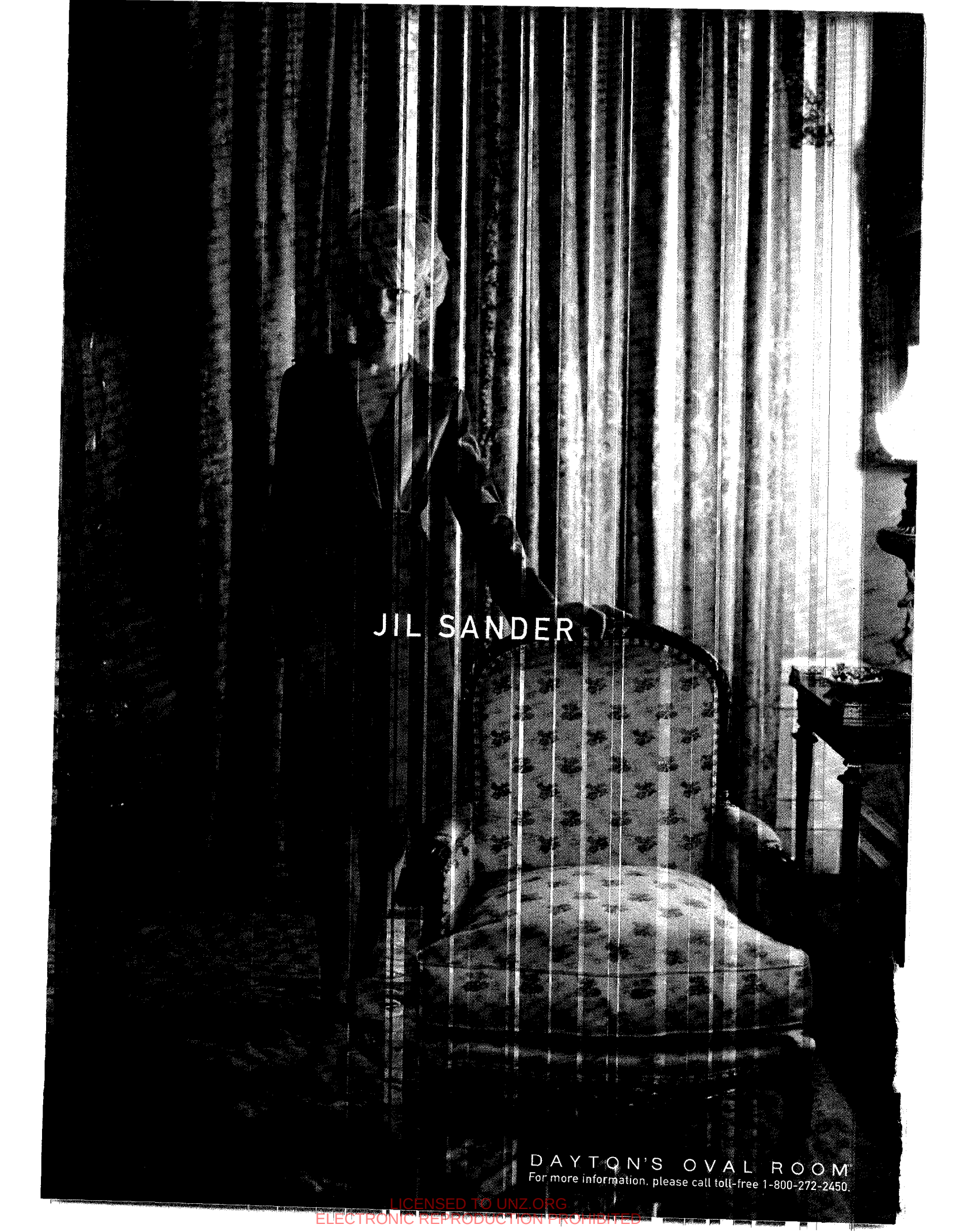
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of love into a feverish, sensual spectacle. Watching it is like being inside the mind of an obsessed lover: every detail is magnified, every action significant. And while the design, the choreography, and the line readings are all over the top, and there are plenty of silly moments, the two central performances—by Marin Hinkle, as a murderous young woman, and Christopher McCann, as the servant who helps to corrupt her—make this production utterly riveting. A Theatre for a New Audience production. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes March 15.)

**CHICAGO**—Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the 1975 Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed this time around by Ann Reinking, who co-stars with Bebe Neuwirth) is about a woman who gets away with murder. This razzle-dazzle concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/25/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**CROSSCURRENTS**—Guadeloupean playwright Gerty Dambury's drama examines the clash of cultures on an Indian Ocean island. (Ubu Repertory Theatre, 15 W. 28th St. 679-7562. Closes March 23.)

**DON JUAN COMES BACK FROM THE WAR**—The Willow Cabin Theatre Company presents Ödön von Horváth's 1936 play, directed by Edward Berkeley. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 886-1889. Closes March 23.)

**FASSBINDER IN THE FRYING PAN**—A double bill of plays by Rainer Werner Fassbinder—"The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant" and "Bremen Freedom"—performed aboard the Frying Pan, a salvaged lightship. (Pier 63, 23rd St. at the West Side Highway. 340-8032. Closes March 25.)

**FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!**—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in the latest edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

**FULL GALLOP**—The legendary, vividly eccentric fashion editor Diana Vreeland is the subject of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play, in which Wilson stars. Set in 1971, shortly after Vreeland was fired from *Vogue*, it's rich and resonant—very funny and very moving. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

**GOOD AS NEW**—Laura Esterman portrays a post-facelift wife and Jennifer Dundas and John Spencer her daughter and husband, in a drama by Peter Hedges. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes March 16.)

**A HUEY P. NEWTON STORY**—Roger Guenveur Smith gives an outstanding performance in a one-man show that he assembled from interviews with and writings by the co-founder of the Black Panther Party. Jiggling his legs, chain-smoking, and talking ninety miles a minute, Smith's Newton courses from subject to subject: the ten points of the Black Panther platform; violence and guns; the man for whom he was named, Huey P. Long; Shakespeare. At times he improvises with the audience and with the play's talented sound designer, Marc Anthony Thompson. A mesmerizing (and demystifying) hour and forty-five minutes. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes March 23.)

**IN-BETWEENS**—A prostitute, a transvestite, and a couple of ex-cons make up the cast of characters in a darkly comic love story by Bryan Goluboff, set in the Bronx. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

**JOSEPH GABRIEL: MAGIC ON BROADWAY**—Mr. Gabriel has performed at the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton for the past ten years, and his feats are certainly impressive, but it's all too clear from the trappings of his act—dancers in polka-dotted boxer shorts, a sequined Elvis—that he hasn't left Nevada behind. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**KEROUAC**—A jazz musical about the Beat author, by Reena Heenan. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-8528. Closes March 19.)

**THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO**—Alfred Uhry teams up again with Dana Ivey (who starred in the original production of his "Driving Miss Daisy") and Ron Lagomarsino (who directed it) to bring this romantic comedy to Broadway. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

**LATE NITE CATECHISM**—Maripat Donovan offers a commandingly funny performance as the lone nun in charge of an adult catechism class, and the audience brings as much to the performance as the script does. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)



**FOR THE LOVE OF IVEY:** *Having played the title role in Alfred Uhry's "Driving Miss Daisy" ten years ago, Dana Ivey reenters his Southern-Jewish-society milieu in "The Last Night of Ballyhoo," as the mother of a young woman who falls short of her family's expectations.*

**THE LITTLE FRIEDA MYSTERIES**—The deliciously sick humor that Amy and David Sedaris have displayed in their previous plays ("Stitches," "One Woman Shoe") isn't as feverishly funny in this new one, although it does provide Ms. Sedaris with an opportunity to reprise, for a few moments, one of her trademark characters, a wildly toilet-tongued toughie who, once seen (and heard), can never be forgotten. Also with Penny Boyer, Chuck Coggins, and David Rakoff. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes March 15.)

**MINUTES FROM THE BLUE ROUTE**—In Tom Donaghy's wistful, funny play, set in the suburbs during a Labor Day weekend, the attempts of a troubled nuclear family to connect threaten a meltdown. Under the direction of David Warren, the actors do a terrific job with the indirect language that their characters have developed for speaking to one another. As mother and father (Elizabeth Franz and Stephen Mendillo) and son and daughter (Matt McGrath and Catherine Kellner) talk and talk—and listen only to what they can stand to hear—Donaghy makes it sadly clear how useless speech can be as a means of communication. Derek McLane designed the evocative set. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes March 15.)

**MY ASTONISHING SELF**—Donal Donnelly impersonates George Bernard Shaw, in a one-man show by Michael Voysey. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes March 16.)

**NOT WAVYING . . .**—Kyra Sedgwick stars as a woman recovering from mental illness, in a drama by Gen LeRoy. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes March 23.)

**ONCE UPON A MATTRESS**—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical, based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea," but she deserves a vehicle that, to paraphrase Jerome Kern, is not merely lovely to look at but delightful to know. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**ONE FLEA SPARE**—Dianne Wiest is in the cast of Naomi Wallace's play, set during London's great plague, in 1665. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes March 29.)

**PRESENT LAUGHTER**—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

**PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS**—John Patrick Shanley's new comedy, about a man who can't make love to his fiancée unless a pair of his father's argyle socks are within reach, is blessed with two wonderfully funny performances: Daniel Gerroll's, as a friend of the feckless fetishist, and Edward Herrmann's, as a hilariously inappropriate psychiatrist (he bangs a gavel on his desk to end sessions). Herrmann, the straw that has stirred many a theatrical drink, has been absent from the New York stage for several years, and his warm, outsized presence and perennial professionalism make you grateful for his return. The cast also includes Andrew McCarthy (he's the one with the sock problem), Margaret Colin, and Park Overall, as a scarily sassy Texan. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**A QUESTION OF MERCY**—A 1991 essay on doctor-assisted suicide published in the *Times Magazine* inspired this work by David Rabe. Douglas Hughes directed; Veanne Cox and Stephen Spinella are in the cast. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

**SCAPIN**—Bill Irwin's production (he has the title role, he directed, and, with the playwright Mark O'Donnell, he adapted the script) of Molière's comedy is a perfect blend of sweetness and anarchy. Some of the casting is questionable, but Christopher Evan Welch raises only the question "When will we see him again?" He's sensational: game, rubbery, and hilarious, and every bit Irwin's clownish equal. (1/27/97) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes March 23.)

**SIGNATURE THEATRE COMPANY**—The company continues its Sam Shepard season with three one-acts: the brilliant "Pecos Bill," a twenty-minute musical about the Wild West legend and his short-lived wife, which suggests the distance between the Western myth and the reality; "Killer's Head," a fifteen-minute monologue delivered blindfolded from an electric chair, which has the power to make you contemplate the meaning of murder; and "Action," an overwhelmingly claustrophobic tale about finding one's identity, which becomes hard to take. All three were thoughtfully directed by Darrell Larson. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes March 23.)

**STANLEY**—Circle in the Square springs back to life with this triumphant mounting of the Royal National Theatre production of Pam Gems's play about the British artist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). Antony Sher's portrayal of Spencer, whose narcissism knew no bounds, is prodigiously energetic and emotional—and, against all odds, sympathetic, even as he abandons his wife, Hilda (Deborah Findlay), to marry a superficial lesbian (Anna Chancellor) whose beauty he cannot resist. The play itself has its limitations (too much talk about the meaning of life and art), but Sher's performance doesn't. John Caird, the director, and his set designer, Tim

MICHAEL SPANO



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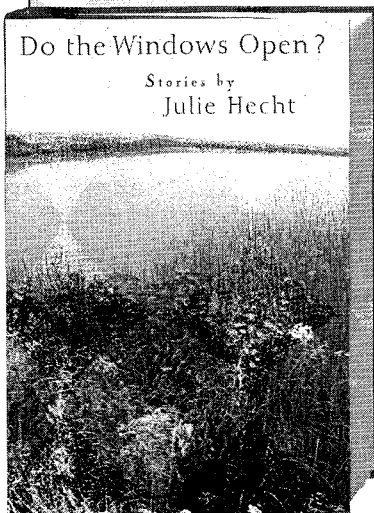
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Do the Windows Open?

Stories by  
 Julie Hecht



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Hatley, have used the available space well, surrounding the audience with reproductions of Spencer's paintings and turning the theatre into a cathedral of art. (3/10/97) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

**STONEMALL JACKSON'S HOUSE**—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy, about a woman who pushes the racial envelope, hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

**THREE SISTERS**—Scott Elliott has assembled a dozen big and biggish names for this production of Chekhov's play, and it's as if he got lost in the stars: for the audience, the experience is one of watching actors act instead of seeing how people live. Amy Irving's portrayal of Olga, the oldest sister, grows in strength through the evening; Jeanne Tripplehorn, as Masha, acts like a spoiled yuppie; and Lili Taylor, as Irina, the youngest and dreamiest of the trio, stares into the middle distance a lot. Billy Crudup and Calista Flockhart are good, but the richest performance is by David Strathairn, who, as the army officer Vershinin, combines notes of sad gravity and hopefulness in a resonant chord of humanity. (3/10/97) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

**TOKYO SHOCK BOYS**—A troupe of Japanese vaudevillians who specialize in a brand of humor that involves ingesting, inhaling, and generally messing around with unlikely substances, objects, and animals. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

**THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA**—Productions of Shakespeare's early comedy don't tend to come around as often as they have this season; this one, a rollicking affair that the Blue Light Theatre Company has set in Texas in 1876, is worth seeing despite the Southern accents and the surfeit of shtick. Greg Naughton makes a compelling Proteus, the gentleman who betrays and is forgiven by his friend Valentine (Talmadge Lowe). The cast also includes Vivienne Benesch, Joe Grifasi, Molly Regan, Matthew Saldivar, Camila Sanes, and a shepherd-lab mix named Fred, who conveys the nuances of his role as Crab the dog with remarkably expressive eyebrows. Dylan Baker directed. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes March 16.)

**VIOLET**—A musical based on Doris Betts's story "The Ugliest Pilgrim," about a scarred woman's journey to seek the help of a TV faith healer. Music by Jeanine Tesori; book and lyrics by Brian Crawley. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 30.)

**WHAT PARTY?**—A New York debutante and her beau navigate the sea of affluence, in a farce by Jennifer Farber. (Gold Room, 74 Varick St., between Canal and Grand Sts. 334-9594. Closes March 16.)

**WORDFIRE FESTIVAL**—The Watermark Theatre's annual solo-performance shindig continues through March 16, with Linda Mancini, Craig Allen Edwards, Myriam Cyr, David Cale, Dael Orlandersmith, Barbara Pitts, Aviva Jane Carlin, Anita Liberty, and Lenora Champagne. (Vineyard's 26th St. Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. For information, call 966-9290.)

## LONG RUNS

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. ... **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES**: Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. ...

**BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK**: Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. ... **CATS**: Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. ...

**THE FANTASTICKS**: Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. ...

**A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM**: St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. ...

**GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL**: SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. ... **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY**: Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. ... **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE**: Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. ... **THE KING AND I**: Neil Simon,

250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. ... **MASTER CLASS**: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. ... **LES MISÉRABLES**: Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. ... **MISS SAIGON**: Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. ... **PERFECT CRIME**: Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. ... **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**: Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. ... **RENT**: Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. ... **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN**: Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 307-4100. ... **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ**: Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. ... **STOMP**: Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. ... **SUNSET BOULEVARD**: Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. (Closes March 23.) ... **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING**: St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. ... **VICTOR/VICTORIA**: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

## DANCE

**BALLET TECH**—For twenty years, Eliot Feld has been auditioning local third and fourth graders for his dance school, and this season, for the first time, his professional troupe consists solely of Ballet Tech grads. In a nod to this homegrown talent, Feld has renamed the company; for the next five weeks it performs in six repertory works, three revivals, and eight premières. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 12-14 and March 18 at 8, March 15 at 2 and 8, and March 16 at noon and 4. Through April 13.)

**"LORD OF THE DANCE"**—The onetime Riverdancer Michael Flatley returns to these shores in his own thunderous vehicle, with a supporting cast of thirty-nine, who join the quick-footed star in high-octane versions of the jigs, reels, and hornpipes of traditional Irish dance. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. March 14 and March 16-17 at 8 and March 15 at 2 and 8.)

**DANCES PATRELLE**—The choreographer Francis Patrelle and his company of moonlighting pros present new work by Alan Hineline, Miriam Mahdavian, and Patrelle himself. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 14-15 at 8 and March 16 at 2.)

**ALVIN AILEY REPERTORY ENSEMBLE**—The top dancers of the Ailey school perform "No More Exotica," by Ronald K. Brown, "Three Dances with Army Blankets," by Daniel Shapiro and Joanie Smith, "Meridians," by Andre Tyson, and Ailey's "Isba" and "Escapades." (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. March 14 at 7, March 15 at 2 and 7, and March 16 at 3.)

**NANCY MEEHAN DANCE COMPANY**—In its twenty-fifth anniversary season, the nine-member troupe presents "Crossings in a Mountain Dream," "Glacier Track," and a new work. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 14-16 at 8:30.)

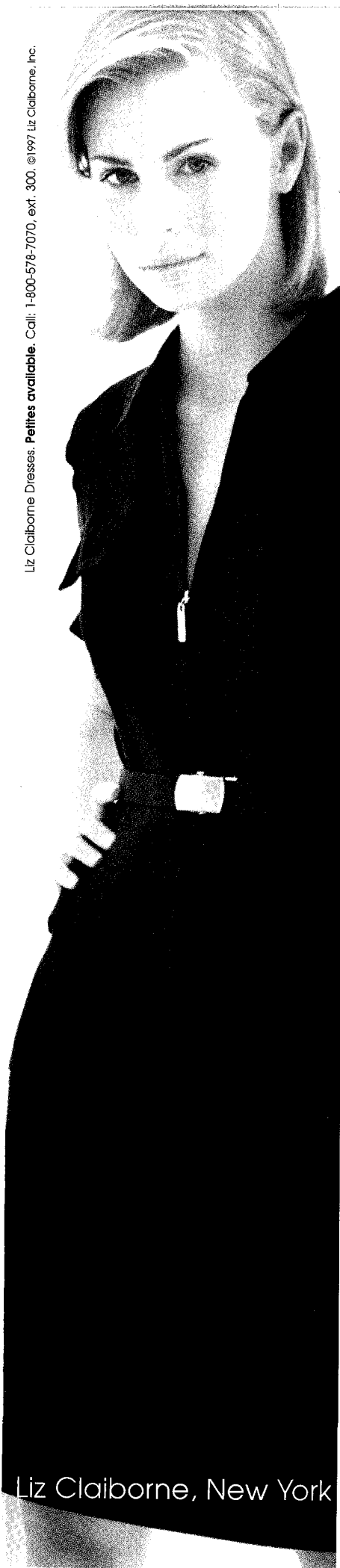
**"CARNIVAL"**—Dance Theatre Workshop's mid-winter performance festival continues. March 12 and March 15 at 8: Tim Hadel performs with his two sons, Spencer and Ryan, who are two and five years old, respectively. ... ¶ March 13 at 8 and March 16 at 3: Wally Cardona and his company dance "Monster Suite," set to a Walter Quintus score of scream-movie soundtracks. With "Blood Variations." ... ¶ March 14 at 8: Maura Nguyen Donohue performs "Lotus Blossom Itch" with her four-member troupe and the performance-art group Slant, and Andrea E. Woods presents "The Apple Doesn't Fall Too Far from the Tree." (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

**PILAR RIOJA**—The marquesa of Spanish dance brings selections in a variety of Iberian styles, from *tablao* and *taranto* to rumba. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. March 12 and March 18 at 11 A.M., March 13 and March 15 at 8, and March 16 at 3.)

**BARNARD SHOWCASE**—Choreographers Sean Curran, Kraig Patterson, Lisa Rinehart, and Janet Soares present new works created for student dancers. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 14-15 at 8.)



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## NIGHT LIFE

## CONCERTS

**THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND**—The front end of a ten-evening set with the boys from Macon, who, when they started out in 1969, already seemed like a troop of battle-scarred veterans. Before anyone unfurled the Southern-rock banner, they were juggling blues and jazz—two musical forms known for resilience. Despite the periodic feuding, splinter groups, and devastating deaths, these grizzled midnight riders are still soldiering on. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 12, March 14-16, and March 18-19, all at 7. Continues through March 23.)

**TED ROSENTHAL AND BILL CHARLAP**—Both of these smart pianists worked with the great saxophonist Gerry Mulligan; no further examination of their résumés is needed. Their duets should be heady affairs. (Jazz Performance Space, New School, 55 W. 13th St. 229-5488. March 12 at 8.)

**KODO**—The drumming ensemble from Japan. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 12-13 at 8.)

**MANDY PATINKIN**—Back on Broadway, in a set of benefit concerts. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6280. March 12, March 14-15, and March 18-19, all at 8, and March 16 at 3.)

**"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"**—Celebrating the true king of swing, Louis Armstrong, are Satchmo's bassist, Arvell Shaw, and his Louis Armstrong Legacy Band. Celebrating the nominal king of swing, Benny Goodman, are saxophonist, historian, and late-era Goodman sideman Loren Schoenberg and his ensemble, joined by pianist Marty Napoleon and clarinetist Sol Yaged. Both bands do their inspirations proud. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. March 13 at 8.)

**PHIL COLLINS**—Having been everything a rock star could hope to be (front man for Genesis, solo artist, producer, actor, even part-time drummer-for-hire), Collins discharged his band and played all the instruments himself on his sixth solo album, "Both Sides" (1993). His new record is called "Dance Into the Light." No one's dancing though—it's the usual nerveless combination of mawkish up-tempo numbers and earnest ballads. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. March 13-14 at 8.)

**THE CARDIGANS**—More Blondie than Abba, the cardigans have taken Swedish good looks and kitschy melody into uncharted territory. They're one of the most likable bands to have enjoyed widespread success in a long time, and in concert their good cheer is as contagious as their candy-coated pop. With the incredibly cute Scottish pop of Bis. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 14 at 8.)

**THE CLANCY BROTHERS / NORTHEAST WINDS**—Jigs, reels, sea chanteys, and more, don't ye know. (Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. March 14 at 8.)

**SAVOY-DOUCET CAJUN BAND**—Featuring accordionist Marc Savoy, singer and guitarist Ann Savoy, and fiddler Michael Doucet (of Beau-soleil). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 15 at 8.)

**WARREN VACHÉ, JOE PUMA, AND MURRAY WALL**—Cornettist Vaché and guitarist Puma must channel Bix Beiderbecke and Eddie Lang when they play together, so simpatico is their feel for the lyrical pleasures of classic jazz. Bassist Wall rounds out the trio. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. 752-1428. March 16 at 5.)

**ROBERT HUNTER**—Jerry Garcia is gone, but Hunter, his longtime lyricist, keeps on truckin'. A singer-songwriter with his own curved vision, he may have a more limited forum these days, but he undoubtedly still has something to say. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 16-17 at 8.)

**THE CHIEFTAINS**—From their late-fifties work in the ensemble Ceoltóirí Chualann to their recent collaborations with Van Morrison and James Galway, these instrumental wizards have been doing for traditional Irish music what Bill Monroe did for the rural American string band: treating it with a respect and dignity that lift it well above any salt-of-the-earth sentimentality. (Carnegie Hall. March 17 at 8.)

**FRANK FOSTER AND FRANK WESS**—Ham and eggs, Ben and Jerry, Foster and Wess—you can split each team, but why would you want to? The two saxophonists made a great pair in



*Ginger Baker's Denver Jazz Quartet, at Iridium.*

the fifties Basie band, and their aesthetic partnership has prevailed, on and off, ever since. They have distinct voices on tenor, and Wess is also a superb flutist and altoist, but in combination their interplay takes on a separated-at-birth cohesiveness. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802. March 18 at 8.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

*(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)*

**BIRDLAND**, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs. March 13-15: The **GREG ABATE** quartet. March 17: The **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. March 18: The **AVISHAI COHEN** sextet. Dining.

**BLUE NOTE**, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 16: The **PHIL WOODS SAX MACHINE** and the **RON CARTER** string ensemble. Virtuosos rarely feel the need to beef up their bands, sufficient solo space being their real aim, but for this gig alto saxophonist Woods and bassist Carter are both bringing along expanded ensembles. Additional altos will give the competitive Woods the chance to show off his Old Master chops, while four cellos will offer cushioning and counterpoint for Carter's flashy work. March 17: The **BMI/NEW YORK JAZZ ORCHESTRA**, featuring **JOE LOVANO**. Starting March 18: The virtuosic small bands of pianist **EDDIE PALMIERI** and percussionist **PONCHO SANCHEZ** both use the rhythmic swelter of Latin music to provide a base for fervent jazz improvisation. You'll be able to hear the rumble of pummelled keyboards and pounding congas clear down Sixth Avenue. Dining.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March, the amazing **EARTHA KITT**. . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge.

**IRIDIUM**, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through March 16: **GINGER BAKER'S DENVER JAZZ QUARTET**. After the mid-life triumph of his last two jazz-inflected recordings, "Going Back Home" and "Falling off the Roof," Baker, the former Cream drummer, can almost be forgiven for introducing the extended—and now obligatory—drum solo into rock music thirty years ago. His exhibitionism aside, he has always been a particularly musical drummer whose personal sense of swing combines primal directness with gambols of dazzling multi-rhythmic complexity. Unfortunately, neither Charlie Haden nor Bill Frisell, his "Going Back Home" teammates, will be joining him, but he'll have the adventurous young trumpeter Ron Miles and the marvellous, unsung early-fusion guitarist Jerry Hahn on hand. From March 18: The **MARK WHITFIELD** quartet. Dining.

**KNICKERBOCKER**, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. March 12-15: Pianist **CAROL BRITTO** and bassist **FRANK TATE** are two like-minded mainstreamers whose comfortable conservatism never obscures their well-seasoned lyrical gifts.

**MAXIM'S**, 680 Madison Ave. (751-5111)—A mock-nineteenth-century bistro with stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. Through March 15: Musical-comedy doyenne **KAYE BALLARD**. Dining.

**RAINBOW & STARS**, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. In through March 22: Norma Desmond understudy **KAREN MASON**. . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

**SMALLS**, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. March 12-13: The **MYRON WALDEN** quartet. Walden is part of the fresh crop of alto saxophonists which has seemingly sprouted overnight. Like Steve Wilson and Sherwin Irby, he's a rousing talent worth keeping your eye on. March 14-15: The **PHILIP HARPER** quintet. Before it became commonplace for hot-shot young trumpeters to arrive in the city with every other Greyhound bus, Harper was out there blowing his face off, reviving the spirit of Lee Morgan and other hard-playing hard boppers. Since the breakup of the popular Harper Brothers band, he's been going it alone and gaining considerable sagacity and poise in the process. Stocked to the gills with exciting new players, the **JASON LINDNER BIG BAND** now holds court every Monday.

**SWEET BASIL**, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through March 16: The **BILLY HART** group. From March 18: The **ANDREW CYRILLE** quintet. Dining.

**VILLAGE GATE**, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—Through March 15: The **JOEL HELLENY** quartet. Helleny, a first-rate trombonist, has been a valued sideman for such established mainstream players as Scott Hamilton and Randy Sandke; it's about time he got to shine on his own. The excellent pianist **MIKE LE DONNE** will be another welcome presence on the bandstand. Starting March 18: **MANHATTAN BLUES 4**. Dining.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 16: The **TOMMY FLANAGAN** trio. Starting March 18: The **RON AFFIE** trio, featuring **ESSIE** **ESSIE** and **JEFF (TAIN) WATTS**. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

**VISIONES**, 125 Macdougall St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—March 12-15: A bassist with a resonant, fingers-in-the-wood tone and a rhythmic spin that calls to mind the great Wilbur Ware, **OMER AVITAL** gathers around himself some of the brightest of the new jazz mavericks.





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### ROCK, ETC.

**BROWNIES**, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—March 13: Local power pop from 44. **CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.**, 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—March 13: **JOHN PARIS**. March 14-15: Longtime Chuck Berry pianist **JOHNNIE JOHNSON**.

**IRVING PLAZA**, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 12: The **CRANES**. March 17: Under the leadership of the tradition-shaking Celtic-music gadfly Larry Kirwan, the raucously rocking **BLACK 47** has become an American version of the Pogues—only with a wider musical point of view and fewer barroom-brawl wounds. March 18: **ERASURE**. Synth pop lives! Though the guitar-driven glory days of grunge virtually destroyed their career, Vince Clark and Andy Bell are back, and suddenly their percolating bells and whistles couldn't be more fashionable.

**KNITTING FACTORY**, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Through March 15: **ROBYN HITCHCOCK**. March 16: The fact that **VIC CHESTNUTT** uses a wheelchair may have earned this unclassifiable singer-songwriter more media attention, but his riveting music is what's won him the admiration of his peers. On "Sweet Relief II—Gravity of the Situation," a motley crew (including Madonna, Smashing Pumpkins, and Garbage) pays tribute to his work. With the mellow alternative country of the **SCUD MOUNTAIN BOYS**. March 17: **VERNON REID'S MY SCIENCE PROJECT**. Clever jazz-flavored noise from the former Living Colour guitarist. Starting March 18: **BELA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES**.

**MAXWELL'S**, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—March 12: **JONATHAN FIRE-EATER**. If Eddie Munster had grown up listening to the Cramps and lived on the Lower East Side, he might be making the sort of music that these black-clad night crawlers do. Open caskets, embalmed hands, and undertakers are three topics on the band's recent EP, "Tremble Under Boom Lights," the strength of which won the lads a contract with Dreamworks.

**MERCURY LOUNGE**, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 12-13: **JONATHAN RICHMAN**. March 14: **SIMON TOWNSHEND**, the long-suffering brother of Pete, joins the high-brow folk of **PROFESSOR AND MARYANN**.

**TRAMPS**, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Further proof of Yoko Ono's ongoing influence, the Japanese duo **CIBO MATTO** churns out kitschy broken-English raps about food ("Beef Jerky," "White Pepper Ice Cream") over a sonic bricolage that jams together some of the most strikingly original sounds that have ever found their way onto a record. The group's stunning (if occasionally grating) debut, "Viva! La Woman," is one of last year's must-have albums. With **RAILROAD JERK** and **PULSARS**. March 16: **BLACK ROSE**, a celebration of the late Phil Lynott, who was the voice of Thin Lizzy.

**WEBSTER HALL**, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. March 12: The **PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**, with **REDD KROSS**. An evening of frenetic speed pop by two bands who are rapidly proving themselves to be one-hit wonders.

**WETLANDS**, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—March 12: **SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK** with **BOB DOROUGH** and his jazz trio. March 13: Raunchy Delta blues god **R. L. BURNSIDE**, with the soulful swamp blues of **JOHNNY JENKINS**.

## ART

### MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Giambattista Tiepolo." This ravishing assembly—more than sixty works, mostly paintings—strongly suggests that the eighteenth-century Venetian master, a pivot between the baroque and the rococo, is due for a fin-de-siècle reevaluation. Through April 27. . . . ¶ The Costume Institute's much heralded "Christian Dior" blockbuster displays more than eighty opulent items from the decade beginning in 1947, when the designer first presented his influential New Look. Through March 23. . . . ¶ "The Gods of War: Sacred Imagery and the Decoration of Arms and Armor." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Young and Restless," a very good group of recent videos by seventeen women. Most of the works are animated (implicitly if not overtly) by a lively feminist consciousness; on the whole, they avoid slick production values, but they're certainly not artless. Three highlights: Cheryl Donegan's "Head" (1993), in which the artist goes down on a milk container; Johnna MacArthur's "Chalk Confession" (1996), with the artist's hand repeatedly scribbling on a small slate, like a Cy Twombly blackboard painting in motion; and Alex Bag's "Untitled Fall '95," a sardonic tour de force on the evolution and miseries of a young woman in art school, which, mining punk rock's archive of attitudes and

cusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-century artists. Through June 1. . . . ¶ "Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography." Through April 27. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SoHo**, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Art/Fashion," an exhibition that first appeared at the Biennale di Firenze, presents garments designed by visual artists and other piecework. Through June 8. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The fourth-floor gallery has unveiled a portion of the Biennial, which opens completely on March 20. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk," an exhibition devoted to vanishing and extinct species, includes a diorama of an Everglades gator hole, a VW bug covered with zebra mussels, animal *objets* (cobra boots, baleen corsets, a rhino-foot ashtray), and a few representatives—a Madagascar radiated tortoise, baby alligators, cichlids—from the Bronx Zoo's Species Survival Plan. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART**, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Rediscovering James Brooks: W.P.A. Murals and Other Figural Works." Through May 11. . . . ¶ "Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt" presents amulets, jewelry, statues, painted mummy cases, and other objects, everyday and sacred. Through May 18. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

**JEWISH MUSEUM**, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Bordering on Fiction: Chantal Akerman's D'ESt," a film-and-video installation chronicling the artist's trip through reunified Germany and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through May 27. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

**MUSEO DEL BARRIO**, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (831-7272)—"The Conceptual Trend" presents works by six artists from Mexico City which question the strong national and cultural identity presented in earlier Mexican art. Through April 30. . . . ¶ "Santos: Sculptures Between Heaven and Earth," a modest but excellent exhibition of Caribbean devotional figures, which will be on permanent display. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

**MUSEUM FOR AFRICAN ART**, 593 Broadway, at Houston St. (966-1313)—"Art That Heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia" and "To Cure and Protect: Sickness and Health in African Art," related exhibitions that include parchment healing scrolls, talismanic paintings by clerics of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, masks, amulets, and divination tools from

Zaire, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and other sub-Saharan countries. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

**MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FOLK ART**, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Henry Darger: The Unreality of Being" is a retrospective devoted to watercolors and pencil drawings (apparently the outcome of the artist's childhood in orphanages and an asylum for the feeble-minded) of virtuous girls threatened by villainous adults. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Agayuliyaraput (Our Way of Making Prayer): The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks," an exhibition



"The Photomontages of Hannah Höch," at MOMA.

emotions, amply demonstrates that hatred and disgust remain vivid, energizing possibilities for contemporary art. Through March 30. . . . ¶ "The Photomontages of Hannah Höch." Through May 20. . . . ¶ "Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980s." Forty examples from the Abstract Expressionist's final working decade. Through April 29. (For more de Kooning, see Galleries—Uptown). . . . ¶ "Manuel Alvarez Bravo," a retrospective of the Mexican photographer's career (see Photography). (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Bran-





*Kirsten Owen* photographed by © BRUCE WEBER.  
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of elaborate masks from southwestern Alaska. The majority were collected in the late nineteenth century; the current show, which opened in Toksook Bay and Bethel, Alaska, was created in consultation with those Yup'ik communities. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

**THE NEW MUSEUM**, 583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (219-1222)—Conceptual art that gives you something to look at. (What a concept!) Since 1983, the Chilean artist Eugenio Dittborn has been using the international mails to distribute his paintings; in the beginning it was a way of circumventing the restrictive Pinochet regime, but it has become an integral part of his politically charged (though not preachy) art. He paints, prints, and sews his images onto flimsy canvas squares, which the recipient then reassembles; after they have been exhibited, they are mailed to the next place. "The Thirteenth History of the Human Face" comprises a series of randomly jumbled-together faces culled from a variety of sources: field photographs of Indians, pictures from police files, children's drawings, scribbles by schizophrenics. The envelopes that carried the works are exhibited next to them, giving the show a truly global scale. Through April 13. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6; Saturday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 6.)

#### GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

**DUNCAN GRANT** (1885-1978)—A wide-ranging exhibition of paintings and designs by one of the Bloomsbury group's leading artists; his work is more notable for its charm and

verve than for any major accomplishments. Through March 15. (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333.)

**"AGAINST THE GRAIN"**—Paintings by four publicity-shy artists—Howard Daum (1918-88), Norris Embry (1921-81), Sam Glankoff (1894-1982), and Ralph Rosenborg (1913-92)—who shared a late-career surge in productivity. Through March 15. (Snyder, 20 W. 57th St. 262-1160.)

**SHORT LIST—ADELE ALSOP**, Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through March 29. . . .

**GEORG BASELITZ**, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays; through May 17. (For more Baselitz, see Galleries—Downtown.) . . .

**WILLIAM BECKMAN**, Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through March 22. . . .

**PIERRE BONNARD** and **MARK ROTHKO**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through March 22. . . .

**THEODORE EARL BUTLER**, York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through March 21. . . .

**RICHARD DEACON**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through March 29. . . .

**WILLEM DE KOONING**, Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 243-0200. Through March 29. . . .

**ROBERT AND SONIA DELAUNAY**, Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through March 15. . . .

**PHILIP EVERGOOD**, Dintenfuss, 20 E. 79th St. 581-2268. Through March 22. . . .

**PHILIPPE FAVIER**, Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through April 5. . . .

**BRYAN HUNT**, Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through April 21. . . .

**YVONNE JACQUETTE**, DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through March 29. . . .

**JEFF JOYCE**, Winston Wächter, 111 E. 65th St. 327-2526. Through April 12. . . .

**MATTA**, Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124. Through March 22. . . .

**ROBERT MOTHERWELL**, Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7288. Through March 29. . . .

**LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY**, McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Open Mondays; through April 5.

#### GALLERIES—CHELSEA

**JEAN-MARC BUSTAMANTE**—Photographs, sculptures, and wall-mounted reliefs by the French artist. The photographs—of dismal suburbs of Barcelona—seem to belong within the lineage of conceptual/documentary photography; the sculptures and reliefs are utterly and bizarrely opaque. Through April 19. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

**JONATHAN HAMMER**—"The Fantast" and "Portrait of a Man Holding a Heart-Shaped Book," two complex installations incorporating numerous mediums: books, drawings, video, even a carpet. In an elegantly elliptical manner, Hammer traces various narratives involving the Surrealist writer René Crevel, the Zurich Dadaist Hugo Ball, and, rather provocatively, the minimalist sculptor Carl Andre. The elaborately bound books (which are what the artist has been best known for heretofore) were made in collaboration with John Baldessari, Kay Rosen, Donald Baechler, and James Brown. Through March 29. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

**SHORT LIST—DON BONHAM**, Two Sculptors, Inc., 124 W. 18th St. 645-3584. Through April 19. . . .

**FERNANDO CANOYAS**, Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through April 2. . . .

**JOANNE GREENBAUM**, D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through March 23. . . .

**MAXINE HENRYSON AND HUNTER REYNOLDS**, Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through April 13. . . .

**ILYA KABAKOV**, Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. . . .

**ARCHIE RAND**, Baldacci, 521 W. 21st St. 463-0919. Through April 12. . . .

**JOIE ROSEN** and **MICHAEL RUBENSTEIN**, Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Both shows through March 30. . . .

**ROBIN TEWES**, Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through March 30.

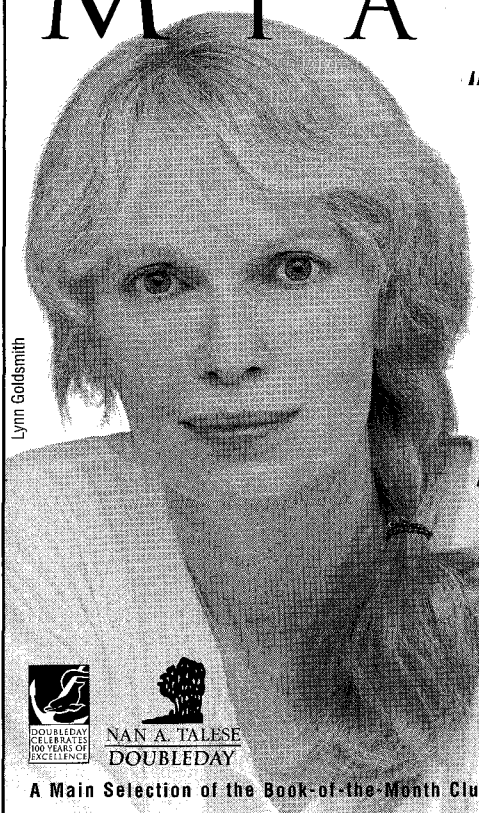
#### GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**CARL ANDRE**—A selection of mostly large-scale works from the Guggenheim Museum's Panza

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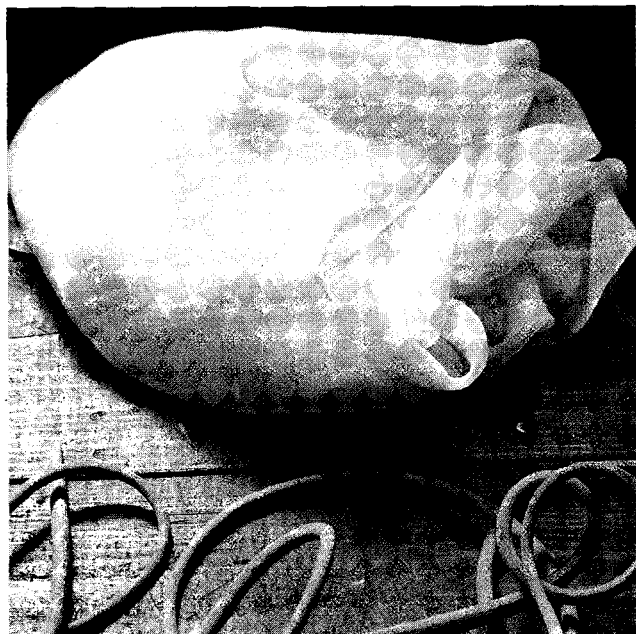
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*"The Hot Day," by Jeannette Montgomery Barron, at Staley-Wise (see Photography).*

Collection and a few recent small-scale ones executed this year, by one of the century's most remarkable sculptors. With one exception—a coil of zinc ribbon—all of them are modular pieces, of wood, sand-lime blocks, steel, Styrofoam, and copper. While the word "minimalist" telegraphs visual astringency, Andre's sculptures are marvellously sensuous. A room devoted to photographs of his early works by his close friend the late Hollis Frampton makes a nice pendant. Through March 29. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

**ARMAN**—The great pack rat of the sixties is back with a new exhibition of assemblages. In the past he crushed and otherwise mutilated the objects; now everything is sparkling and brand spanking new. A cascade of perfectly matched ten-speed bicycles arcs gracefully from wall to floor, like a flip-animation book brought to life; coffeepots, deep-fry baskets, armchairs, and Spanish guitars loop and meander through space and across the gallery walls. The work seems a bit dry and too polished, perhaps, but it's wrought with wit and elegance. Through March 15. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160.)

**GEORGE BASELITZ**—Recent, very large paintings that refer to the artist's childhood in the former East Germany and to his family; they incorporate his signature upside-down figures and employ both Germanic and Slavic motifs. Baselitz remains the most convincing of the neo-expressionist painters, and these works are rich with facility and invention. Through March 15. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St., 431-9224; see also Galleries—Uptown.)

**DAVID BLACK**—Wide-eyed tableaux of upper-class Schadenfreude ("The Benefit Dinner," "The Costume Party," "The Backers' Audition") in appropriately sunny colors. The show offers several plein-air landscapes in homage to the marzipan light of France, but Black is at his most delicious as a satirist. Through April 8. (D.F.N., 560 Broadway. 334-3400.)

**CHARLES LONG**—An installation of sculptures by an artist given to bulbous biomorphic forms and such eccentric material as recycled coffee grounds. Many of the works here waver between art and utility, incorporating furniture, lamps, and, in one case, a working coffeemaker. Through March 22. (Bonakdar, 130 Prince St. 925-8035.)

**AMALIA MESA-BAINS**—"Cihuatlampa: The Place of the Giant Women" presents icons from a mix-and-match Meso-American matriarchy. Some quotations pencilled on the wall betray the

project's earnestness, but the best pieces balance the girth of the figures with light materials, as in the earth mother covered in architectural moss, or the airy copper-mesh pumps suitable for a fifty-footer. Through April 15. (Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224.)

**LAWRENCE WEINER**—"Homeport," a whimsical installation that unites the artist's signature semi-nonsensical slogans with an international chat room, in a virtual world called the Palace. Visitors are encouraged to choose from among the various "avatars" (highfalutin for "handle") and wander around the Palace having postmodernist conversations. If all this confuses you, it's worth recalling that when Marshall McLuhan said "The medium is the message" he meant it more as a warning than a celebration. Through March 15. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160.)

**GROUP SHOW**—Oshin Saginian's monotypes are the strongest work here: working simply with a roller and printing ink, he has created a series of eerie, quasi-representational images, evocative at once of early photography and microscopy, which seem to offer glimpses of an incomprehensible, prehuman (or is it posthuman?) world. The Pakistani artist Shahzia Sikander contributes a suite of brilliantly colored drawings, delicately executed in vegetable dyes, watercolor, dry pigment, and tea stains, which mimic the forms of Persian miniatures as they examine issues of gender and national identity. Pauline Stella Sanchez has covered the floor with an array of mechanical drawings in mandala patterns and fanciful, fluorescent-yellow foam objects placed here and there; her pompous artist's statement, which manages to drag in everything from Carl Jung to the New Physics, reads like a parody. Through March 29. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

**SHORT LIST**—**VINCENT ARCILESI**, Broome Street Gallery, 498 Broome St. 226-6085. Through March 23. . . . **PAUL GIOVANOPOULOS**, Meisel, 141 Prince St. 677-1340. Through March 22. . . . **MARK GREENWOLD**, Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through April 15. . . . **CALLUM INNES**, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through April 12. . . . **JOE NICASTRI**, Fotouhi Cramer, 560 Broadway. 431-1304. Through April 10. . . . **KERRI SCHARLIN**, Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. 941-6210. Through March 22. . . . **NOT VITAL**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through March 22.

#### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

**CHRISTIE'S**—March 12: Nineteenth-century furniture. . . . ¶ March 18: Chinese art, including paintings and calligraphy, especially from the Sung and Yuan periods. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST**: Asian decorative arts. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400. March 14.)

**SOTHEBY'S**—March 12: An arcade sale of modestly priced decorative art. . . . ¶ March 13: Nineteenth-century furniture. . . . ¶ March 14: Art Deco. . . . ¶ March 18: Korean paintings and ceramics and nearly five hundred Chinese snuff bottles. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

**SWANN**—An auction of nineteenth-century photography and photographic literature. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. March 13.)

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the horse's  
mouth



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## PHOTOGRAPHY

**JEANNETTE MONTGOMERY BARRON**—Agile, suggestive black-and-white still-lives using refracted and distorted light. Through March 22. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.)

**MANUEL ALVAREZ BRAVO**—New York pulls out all the f-stops for the Mexican master photographer, who turns ninety-five this year. At the **MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, a comprehensive retrospective that includes rare prints from the artist's personal archive continues through May 18. . . . **At THROCKMORTON**, forty prints by the artist and his first wife, Lola Alvarez Bravo. (153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through May 3.) . . . **At WITKIN**, ninety-five prints (including some vintage color) from 1927 to 1996, along with photographs by Colette Alvarez Urbajtel, who married Alvarez Bravo in 1959. (415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through May 3.)

**"SOMEONE ELSE WITH MY FINGERPRINTS"**—Work by some of the medium-greats (not always represented by the best prints) side by side with pictures by postmodernists and lots of fun junk, all of it designed to prove that the image has an authority that transcends the photographer's power to control it. The point, once made, gets made again and again, but the exhibit is a mind-bending grab bag, mixing Weegee, Lisette Model, Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, Mike Kelley, and Richard Prince with publicity stills from "The Incredible Shrinking Man" and "Star Trek": all images are created equal. Through March 15. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

**"VIEWING OLMSTED"**—A travelling exhibition of very fine work, commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, by Robert Burley, Lee Friedlander, and Geoffrey James, who over seven years visited and revisited Frederick Law Olmsted landscapes throughout North America—from Mount Royal Park, in Montreal, to Mountain View Cemetery, in Oakland. Through March 15. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. 554-4818. Open Mondays.)

**SHORT LIST**—**RICHARD BILLINGHAM**, Lühring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600. Through March 22. . . . **LOIS CONNER**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Through April 19. . . . **LOUISE LAWLER**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through March 15. . . . **SAUL LEITER**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through April 5. . . . **DAVID LEVINTHAL**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through March 21. . . . **ESKO MÄNNIKÖ**, Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Through March 30. . . . **ANDREA MODICA**, Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through April 19. . . . **BARBARA MORGAN**, Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through April 5. . . . **DAVID SELTZER**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through March 29. . . . **ANDRES SERRANO**, Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through April 12. . . . **FREDERICK SOMMER** and **JIM DINE**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through April 5. . . . **NICK WAPLINGTON**, Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through April 12. . . . **OLIVER WASOW**, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through March 29. . . . **JAMES WELLING**, Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480. Through March 29.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum.)



Peter Lieberman's "King Gesar," performed by the Eos Ensemble.

## CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 996-1100.)

## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**—**COSÌ FAN TUTTE**, with Carol Vaness, Susan Graham, Cecilia Bartoli, Stanford Olsen, Mark Oswald, and William Shimell; conducted by James Levine. (March 12 at 8 and March 15 at 1:30.) . . . **EUGENE ONEGIN**, in the opening performances of a new production,

with Galina Gorchakova, Marianna Tarsosova, Vladimir Chernov, Neil Shicoff, and Vladimir Ognovenko; Antonio Pappano. (March 13 and March 17 at 8.) . . . **BILLY BUDD**, with Philip Langridge, Dwayne Croft, and James Morris; Stuart Bedford. (March 14 at 8.) . . . **AIDA**, with Sharon Sweet, Dolora Zajick, Michael Sylvester, and Sherrill Milnes; Adam Fischer. (March 15 at 8.) . . . With Lisa Gasteen, Ms. Zajick, Richard Margison, and Mr. Milnes; Mr. Fischer. (March 18 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House, 362-6000.)

**NEW YORK CITY OPERA**—**CARMEN**. (March 13 at 8.) . . . **LA BOHÈME**. (March 14 at 8.) . . . **LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN**. (March 15 at 1:30.) . . . A double bill of Orff's **CARMINA BURANA** and Weill's **THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS**, in a new production. (March 15 at 8.) . . . **THE MIKADO**. (March 16 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

**OPERA THEATRE COMPANY OF DUBLIN**—Performing Handel's "Amadigi." (Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. March 12 and March 14-15, all at 7:30.)

**"THE PLAY OF MARY MAGDALENE"**—A fully staged medieval music drama, derived from texts in the twelfth-century Fleury Playbook. Presented by the Ensemble for Early Music. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. March 16 and March 23 at 3.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**—Colin Davis, who was central to the Berlioz revival of the nineteen-sixties, conducts the composer's Overture to "Les Francs-Juges" and his orchestral song cycle "Les Nuits d'Été" (featuring the Greek mezzo-soprano Markella Hatziano). Brahms's Symphony No. 3 rounds out the program. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 13-15 at 8.)

**AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**—Works by five American composers—Copland's "State-ments," Converse's "American Sketches," Ruth Crawford Seeger's "Rissolty Rissolty," Elie Siegmeister's "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight," and Harris's Symphony No. 4 ("Folk Song Symphony")—suggest the variety of views at mid-century on how to portray America musically. Leon Botstein conducts the orchestra and the University of Maryland Chorus. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 12 at 8.)

**VOICES OF ASCENSION**—Dennis Keene directs motets by Mozart, Schubert's "Salve Regina," Beethoven's "Elegischer Gesang," and Haydn's "Lord Nelson" Mass. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. March 12 at 8.)

**NEW YORK POPS**—Sure and begorra, would that not be Skitch Henderson leadin' a program for St. Patrick's Day? And would that not be that fine young countertenor Thomas Mark Fallon singin' songs from the old sod? (Carnegie Hall. March 14 at 8.)

**SONIDOS DE LAS AMERICAS**—Concluding events in the annual mini-festival, which this year focus-



ses on music by Puerto Rican composers. March 14 at 8: The American Composers Orchestra Chamber Ensemble performs works by nine composers. (Weill Recital Hall.) . . . ¶ March 16 at 3: The American Composers Orchestra plays music by Jack Délano, Loyda Camacho, Luis Antonio Ramirez (his "Nueve Cantos Antillanos," with soprano Suzanna Guzmán), Héctor Campos-Parsi, and Roberto Sierra (his "Glosas," featuring pianist José Ramos-Santana). Dennis Russell Davies conducts. (Carnegie Hall.)

**PHILHARMONIA VIRTUOSI**—Richard Kapp leads works by Purcell, Malipiero, Beethoven (his C-Major Piano Concerto, with Orli Shaham), and Schubert (his Symphony No. 5). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 15 at 7.)

**ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**—Cecile Licad joins the conductorless ensemble for Schumann's Piano Concerto. Also on the program are Copland's "Short Symphony," Irving Fine's "Serious Song," and Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (the "Jupiter"). (Carnegie Hall. March 15 at 8.)

**MUSICA ANTICA KÖLN**—This highly respected period-instrument ensemble, led by violinist Reinhard Goebel, performs Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos No. 2 and No. 5, as well as his F-Major Harpsichord Concerto (an early version of the Fourth "Brandenburg"), the F-Major Sinfonia (prefiguring the First "Brandenburg"), and his rarely played G-Major Sinfonia-Allegro (BWV 174). (Alice Tully Hall. March 16 at 3.)

**DESSOFF CHOIRS**—Kent Tritle directs Brahms's "A German Requiem," using the composer's accompaniment for piano four-hands. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 16 at 3.)

**"ST. MATTHEW PASSION"**—The Lenten season invites performance of Bach's towering masterpiece of introspection and spiritual fervor. March 16 at 3: The Choir and Orchestra of Trinity Church, directed by Owen Burdick.

(Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873.) . . . ¶ March 18 at 7:30: The Concert Royal period-instrument players join the St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, directed by Gerre Hancock; soloists include tenor Mark Bleeke as the Evangelist and bass-baritone Glendower Jones as Christus. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 757-7013, ext. 3027.)

**NEW YORK MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA**—This plucky group, founded in 1924, plays transcriptions of music by Bartók, Brahms, Vivaldi, and others. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. March 16 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

**GREEK BYZANTINE CHOIR**—Lykourgos Angelopoulos leads the ensemble in liturgical music of the Byzantine rite. (Temple of Dendur, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 17 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**EOS ENSEMBLE**—Two works that explore mystical themes make up this concert, conducted by Jonathan Sheffer. John Tavener's "The Protecting Veil" (here featuring cellist Steven Isserlis) may appeal especially to listeners who equate spirituality with spacing out. Peter Lieberman's "King Gesar" is another matter entirely: since its release last fall on a Sony recording, the work has attracted a sophisticated cult following that is interested in more than navel-staring. Since much of Lieberman's professional activity revolves around the teaching of Tibetan theology, it should come as no surprise that "King Gesar" is based on traditional religious myths of that nation. It is presented here as a sort of semi-staged chamber opera, with baritone Kurt Ollman as the singer-narrator. (Alice Tully Hall. March 17 at 8.)

#### RECITALS

**GIL AND ORLI SHAHAM**—The violinist and pianist, brother and sister, perform Beethoven's Sonata No. 7, Prokofiev's Melodies (Op. 35b), and Dvořák's G-Major Sonatina and F-Major Sonata. (92nd Street Y. March 12 at 8.)

**PETER SCHREIER AND ANDRÁS SCHIFF**—Though not blessed with an especially attractive voice, Peter Schreier has done yeoman's work as one of the few capable German tenors in an era dominated by singers of other vocal ranges. There's no gainsaying his sense of musical responsibility, and that's likely to hold up better than his voice as he proceeds through his sixties. This week he and pianist András Schiff collaborate on three all-Schubert programs at Alice Tully Hall, which together comprise the composer's two song cycles, his principal song cycle *manqué*, and three of his late piano sonatas. March 12 at 8: "Die Schöne Müllerin" and the G-Major Piano Sonata (D. 894). . . . ¶ March 14 at 8: "Winterreise" and the A-Major Piano Sonata (D. 959). . . . ¶ March 15 at 8: "Schwanengesang" and the B-Flat-Major Piano Sonata (D. 960).

**BARGEMUSIC**—Presenting works by Wuorinen and Schoenberg. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. March 13 at 7:30 and March 16 at 4.)

**HENRY COWELL FESTIVAL, THE SEQUEL**—Did Cowell ever have it so good in his lifetime? In his centennial year his works are popping up on programs like mushrooms after a summer shower: the Juilliard School remembered him with a weeklong festival in January, and now a consortium of modern-music groups has banded together to offer another. March 13 at 8: Keyboardist Sorrel Hays and baritone Thomas Buckner are among the performers in a recital of works by Cowell and Ms. Hays. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.) . . . ¶ March 14 at 7:30: Continuum offers an all-Cowell program that includes his "Homage to Iran" and his "Irish Suite." (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For free tickets, which are required, call 870-1649.) . . . ¶ March 15 at 2: Songs by Cowell, with mezzo-

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Nick was comforted by  
the knowledge that all he  
had scheduled for tomorrow  
was cooking class.

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soprano Mary Ann Hart and pianist Jeanne Golan. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. No tickets necessary.) ... ♫ March 15 at 8: Chamber works by Cowell, played by the Colorado String Quartet and Musicians' Accord. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) ... ♫ March 16 at 3: A concert of various ethnic musics that inspired Cowell. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ... ♫ March 18 at 8: European and Asian musical styles—and instruments—mix in a program of works by Cowell, Cage, Colin McPhee, Terry Riley, Lou Harrison, and Peter Garland. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For information about tickets, call 996-1100.) ... **NOTE:** For information about lectures and other non-performance events during the festival, which concludes on March 25, call 718-951-5655.

**FLUTE FAIR**—March 15 is a day of exhibits, recitals, lectures, and master classes for flutists and those who love them, capped off by a concert, at 5:30, by the all-female flute section of the New York Philharmonic. (Union Theological Seminary, 100 Claremont Ave., at 122nd St. Exhibits open at 9 A.M. For more information, call the New York Flute Club at 757-8339.)

**"AN EVENING AT MONTICELLO"**—Well, almost, except that it's at the 92nd Street Y. Otherwise, the program will resemble what our third President might have enjoyed of an evening, including music by Haydn, Mozart, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and Declaration of Independence co-signer Francis Hopkinson. The roster of performers comprises soprano Amanda Balestrieri, folk fiddler Paul Woodiel, keyboard player R. Benjamin Dobey, and actor E. G. Marshall (serving as the evening's host). (March 15 at 8.)

**St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble**—The group performs Beethoven's E-Flat-Major Septet and two works composed in the wake of its popularity, by Bernhard Romberg and Louis Spohr. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway, March 16 at 2. For information about tickets, call 212-840-7470.)

**ALAN FEINBERG AND STEVEN MAYER**—The pianists, both champions of music by American composers, join for an all-American concert. In addition to four-hand and duo-piano works (including an excerpt from Paul Schoenfeld's "Five Days in the Life of a Manic Depressive"), they offer solo pieces by many other composers, ranging from the early-nineteenth-century effusions of Anthony Philip Heinrich to the high-technique jazz of Art Tatum and the questing modernism of Henry Cowell. (92nd Street Y, March 16 at 3.)

**LARA ST. JOHN**—You've seen her posed nude for her CD cover; now you can hear her play, clothed, in a recital of violin works by Bartók, Ravel, and Ilan Reichtman (who accompanies). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. March 16 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

**ANI KAVAFIAN AND ANNE-MARIE McDERMOTT**—The violinist and the pianist perform music by Mendelssohn and Schubert. (Alice Tully Hall, March 18 at 7:30.)

**JOSHUA BELL AND JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET**—The violinist and the pianist offer sonatas by Beethoven (the "Kreutzer") and Fauré (in A Major), in a program that also includes music by Ysaÿe and Ravel. (Carnegie Hall, March 18 at 8.)

**DAVID HELFGOTT**—Pianist, on a recital tour conveniently timed to benefit from the success of the movie "Shine" (which chronicles his life) and to promote his wife's new book about him. He plays Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata and works by Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt. (Avery Fisher Hall, March 18 at 8.)

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**LANDING IN THE PAST**—The Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation calls Farmingdale, New Jersey, home, but its prize asset, a restored C-54 Skymaster, has been wintering in Brooklyn. The foundation is keeping the mammoth four-engine transport (which, in 1948 and 1949,

with some three hundred similar planes, helped supply Berlin with coal, flour, and other necessities during the Soviet blockade) in a heated hangar at Floyd Bennett Field. On March 16, from noon to 3, volunteers offer free tours of the aircraft, which the foundation rescued five years ago from a Toronto-based outfit that was using it to ship auto parts. (For more information, call 338-3799.)

## ONLY CONNECT



**Drew's Scripts-O-Rama** (<http://home.cdsnet.net/nikko11/scripts.html>)—For aspiring screenwriters (roughly two-thirds of the literate populations of New York and Los Angeles), reading scripts is a necessary part of the educational process. Plain old movie buffs enjoy reading them, too: it takes less time than watching the finished products and is often more enjoyable. Drew's proclaims itself "the most comprehensive index of movie and television scripts available on the Internet." Its inspiration, the late Script Emporium, shut itself down, fearing the wrath of studios unamused at finding their property on public display; here, Drew Feinberg, the site's originator, skirts the copyright-infringement issue by linking to dozens of other sites that feature screenplays and teleplays both famous and unproduced.

Visitors can access two types of scripts: transcripts (the end product of countless hours of listening and inputting and frequent use of the VCR pause button) and original scripts (in various drafts, some typed and some scanned). Most of the classics—"Dr. Strangelove," "The Godfather"—are available in book form, but where else are you going to find "A Goofy Movie" or David Lynch's new "Lost Highway" (which makes no more sense in print than it does on the screen)? The site offers TV scripts (transcripts, for the most part) from "Black Adder" to "The X-Files"; such straight-to-video fare as "Bloodfist 6: Ground Zero" and other Roger Corman productions; and unproduced titles on the order of "Cinque: The Long Voyage" and "Zworykin's Nightmare." Feinberg updates the site frequently; the shooting script for "Train-spotting" was three-quarters complete at press time. Put on some Iggy Pop and go read a movie.

**READINGS**—March 13 at 6:30: Poet and musician Ciaran Carson reads from "Last Night's Fun," his account of drinking, dancing, cooking, and performing traditional music in Ireland. (American Irish Historical Society, Fifth Ave. at 80th St. For reservations, call 288-2263.) ... ♫ March 14 at 7: Humorist David Sedaris reads from his new collection, "Naked"; Maggie Estep reads from her first novel, "Diary of an Emotional Idiot"; and Frederic Tuten reads from his latest novel, "Van Gogh's Bad Café." (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Tickets at the door.) ... ♫ March 18 at 7: Poet Marilyn Hacker reads from her work. (Queens College, Kissena Blvd. and Melbourne Ave., Flushing. 718-997-4646.)

**TALKS**—March 15 from 9 to 5: Panel members for a symposium considering the influence of psychoanalysis on culture (and vice versa) include biographers Peter Gay and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano. (New York Academy of Medicine, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. No tickets necessary. For more information, call 879-6900.) ... ♫ March 17 at 6:30: Author and manga expert Frederick Schodt discusses the popularity of comics in Japan. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015.)

**WALKS**—March 16 at 3:15 and 5: Adventure on a Shoestring gets a jump on St. Patrick's Day with tours of the old Irish neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen. For more information, call 265-2663.

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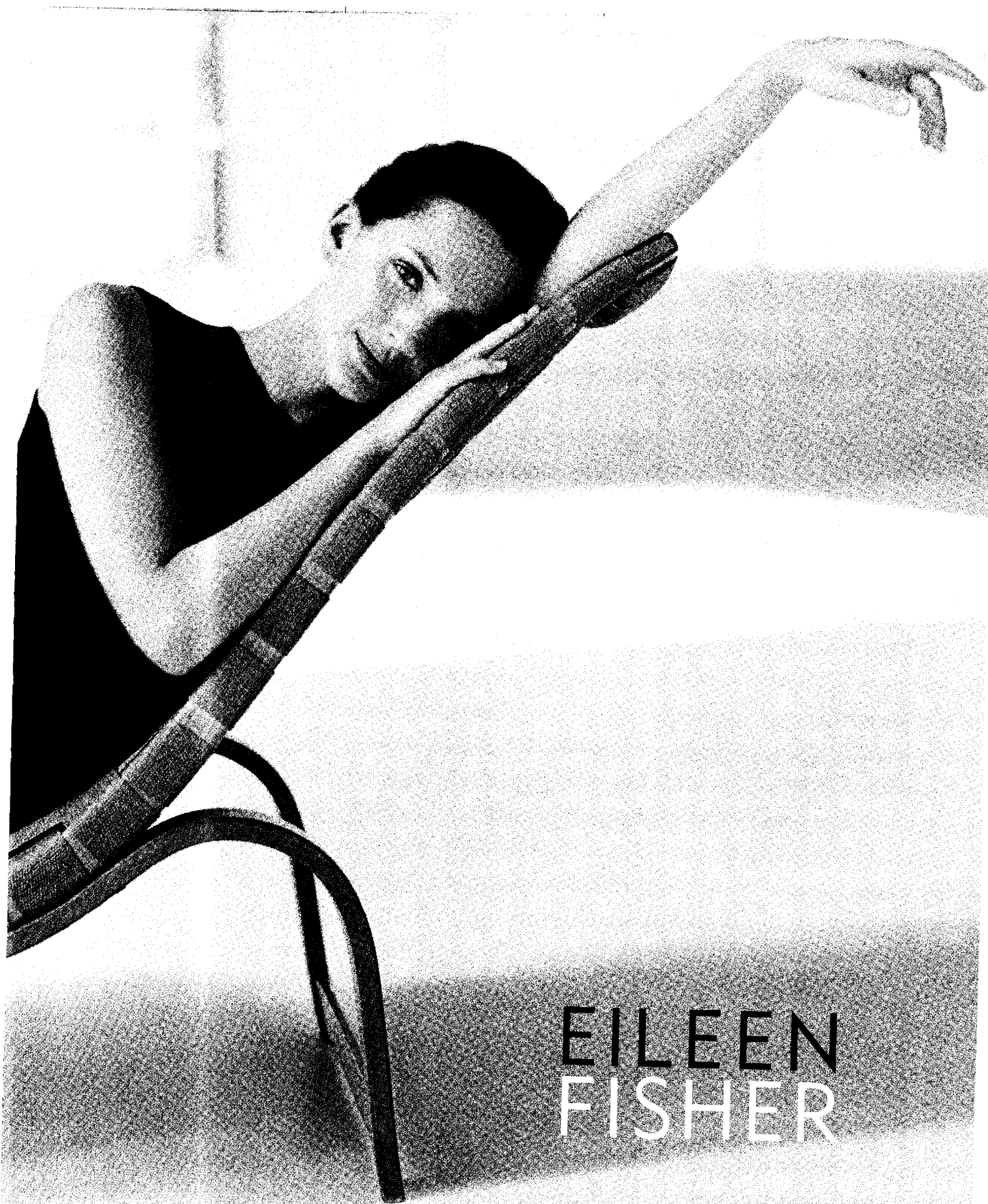
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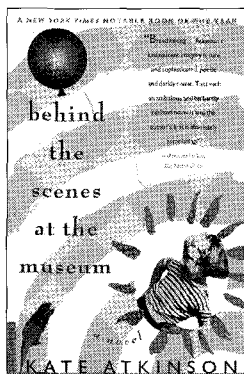
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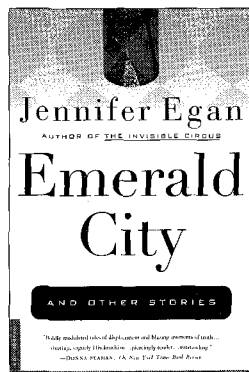
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## THE MOVIES

### FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

**CITY OF INDUSTRY**—Harvey Keitel, Stephen Dorff, Timothy Hutton, and Famke Janssen star in a film noir written by Ken Solaz, directed by John Irvin, and set in the Los Angeles underworld. Opening March 14. (84th Street Sixplex, Guild, and Village East Cinemas.)

**DRUNKS**—The scene is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, where a group of twelve-steppers (played by Richard Lewis, Dianne Wiest, Parker Posey, and Faye Dunaway, among others) talk about themselves and their problems. Directed by Peter Cohn. Opening March 14. (Quad Cinema.)

**LOVE JONES**—A romantic comedy set in Chicago, with Nia Long and Larenz Tate as, respectively, an aspiring photographer and an aspiring novelist. Written and directed by Theodore Witcher. Opening March 14. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

### CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in *The Current Cinema*, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 42.)

**ABSOLUTE POWER**—A sombre, boring little thriller directed by Clint Eastwood. He also stars, as a jewel thief who, while robbing the mansion of a Presidential-campaign contributor, witnesses a murder and then intrudes on the coverup conspiracy. The movie, based on David Baldacci's ridiculous right-wing best-seller, avoids the ponderousness of the liberal Grisham-based films, but Eastwood's slow, deliberate style and conservative cynicism drain the drama of thrills. The cast, a *Who's Who* of accomplished actors (Gene Hackman, Judy Davis, Ed Harris, Scott Glenn), makes the diatribe watchable, if not gripping, but only Laura Linney, in the role of Eastwood's estranged daughter, seems genuinely involved.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

**BIG NIGHT**—The actor Stanley Tucci co-wrote (with Joseph Tropiano), co-directed (with Campbell Scott), and co-stars (with Tony Shalhoub) in this elegant, leisurely low-budget comedy about a struggling Italian restaurant run by a pair of immigrant brothers. The unusually happy, relaxed ensemble includes Ian Holm, Isabella Rossellini, Minnie Driver, Allison Janney, and Campbell Scott. The big set piece—a lavish dinner in honor of the singer-bandleader Louis Prima—is a fitting climax to the movie's patient accumulation of savory and blissfully pointless delights; a convincing illustration of how keen pleasure for pleasure's sake can be.—T.R. (9/23/96) (Cinema 3.)

**BOOTY CALL**—Tommy Davidson, Jamie Foxx, Tamala Jones, and Vivica A. Fox star in a comedy that centers on a double date. Directed by Jeff

Pollack. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

**BREAKING THE WAVES**—The Danish director Lars von Trier tells the sad story of a devout young Scottish woman (Emily Watson) who becomes a whore in order to save the life of her critically ill husband (Stellan Skarsgård). Von Trier gives the highbrow audience precisely what it wanted in the art-house boom years of the fifties and early sixties—nudity plus theology. The erotic-metaphysical hokum would be somewhat easier to take if the picture displayed anything resembling a genuine religious impulse.—T.R. (11/18/96) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

**CYCHO**—The adventures of a bicycle-taxi driver (Le Van Loc) in Ho Chi Minh City. Written and directed by Tran Anh Hung. In Vietnamese. (Film Forum 3; through March 13.)

**DANTE'S PEAK**—A hopeless, humorless tale of an exploding volcano and a town's demise. It has a cast that includes two colorless leads (Pierce Brosnan and Linda Hamilton), two troublesome but cuddly children, a dog, and a grandmother who wades through a lake of sulfuric acid to get her relatives safely to shore. The special effects aren't very special, either. Directed, rather shakily, by Roger Donaldson.—B.D. (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, and Orpheum VII.)

**THE DAYTRIPPERS**—Writer-director Greg Mottola's examination of five Long Islanders (Hope Davis, Anne Meara, Pat McNamara, Parker Posey, and Liev Schreiber) on a drive to Manhattan. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**DONNIE BRASCO**—Mike Newell's study of the relationship between a federal agent (Johnny Depp) who infiltrates the mob and the hit man (Al Pacino) who befriends him. (Reviewed this week in *The Current Cinema*.) (Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

**THE EIGHTH DAY**—An examination of the developing friendship between a salesman (Daniel Auteuil) and a young man with Down's syndrome (Pascal Duquenne). Written and directed by Jaco Van Dormael. In French. (Reviewed this week in *The Current Cinema*.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**THE ENGLISH PATIENT**—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katharine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) she has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

**EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU**—Woody Allen's latest movie is one of his frothiest, and weirdest, to date: a throwback picture that tries to resurrect the spirit of thirties musicals without recourse to irony. There is a deliberate roughness to both the singing (which is kind of charming) and the choreography (which is unwieldy and a little graceless). The all-star cast includes Julia Roberts, Tim Roth, Drew Barrymore, and Alan Alda. You emerge bemused but undeniably cheered up, partly because of the uncomplicated magic of the climax, in which Allen dances with an airborne Goldie Hawn on the bank of the Seine.—A.L. (Lincoln Square, New York Twin, The Screening Room, and 34th St. East.)

**EVITA**—At last, the rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice comes to the screen. The problem is that it remains a rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. The



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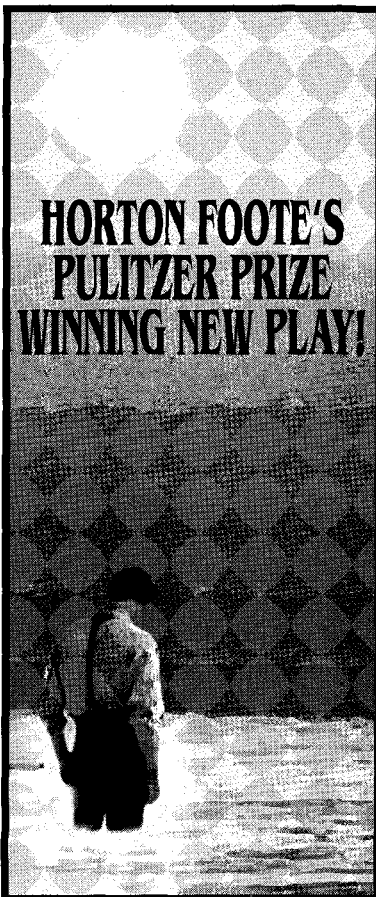
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fact that it's almost bereft of spoken dialogue is good news for Madonna, who, as Eva Perón, is barely required to speak or even to act. Jonathan Pryce is a sly and troubled Juan Perón, and Antonio Banderas prowls through the action as our friendly smoldering narrator. Alan Parker's picture blares and blazes at you without letup, and it works best when it's openly theatrical—only when it's over do you sense how little lay beneath the busy surface.—A.L. (1/6/97) (Sutton.)

**FLIPPING**—Hollywood wiseguys, betrayal, and love, in a drama written and directed by Gene Mitchell. With David Amos, Keith David, and David Proval. (Embassy 4.)

**FOOLS RUSH IN**—Matthew Perry and Salma Hayek are mismatched lovers who marry after their first date, in a romantic comedy directed by Andy Tennant. (84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, State, and Sutton.)

**GENTLEMEN DON'T EAT POETS**—A butler and his wife (Sting and Trudie Styler) enter the service of a paleontologist and his wife (Alan Bates and Theresa Russell), in John-Paul Davidson's dark comedy, set in England in 1949. Adapted by Patrick McGrath from his 1988 novel, "The Grotesque." (Waverly.)

**GOOD LUCK**—A paraplegic dental technician (Gregory Hines) and a blind football player (Vincent D'Onofrio) enter a raft race down the rapids of Oregon's Rogue River. Directed by Richard LaBrie; written by Bob Comfort. (Criterion Center and Manhattan Twin.)

**HAMLET**—Kenneth Branagh's film uses the full text of the play (the running time is nearly four hours), it's shot in 70 mm., and the approach is daringly straightforward. The director himself plays the unhappy Prince, and so lucidly that every shift in the volatile character's mood seems perfectly natural. Derek Jacobi, as Claudius, and Julie Christie, as Gertrude, are also superb. Also with Richard Briers (Polonius) and Kate Winslet (Ophelia).—T.R. (1/13/97) (Paris.)

**HARD EIGHT**—Writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson's story of professional gamblers in Reno stars Philip Baker Hall, John C. Reilly, Samuel L. Jackson, and Gwyneth Paltrow. (Quad Cinema and 62nd & Broadway.)

**JERRY MAGUIRE**—Tom Cruise plays the title character, who is a glib, cocky agent for professional athletes. In the fluid opening scenes, the movie, which was written and directed by Cameron Crowe, promises to be something unusual—a comedy about the spiritual crisis of a shallow man. But the star quickly reverts to his familiar feisty, can-do shtick, and Crowe loses control of the fragile comic tone. Also with Renée Zellweger, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Bonnie Hunt.—T.R. (12/16/96) (Art Greenwich Twin, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and 64th and 2nd.)

**JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE**—A New York businessman (Tim Allen) brings his teen-age son (Sam Huntington)—raised by his estranged wife (JoBeth Williams) in a South American jungle—home to the Big Apple, in a comedy directed by John Pasquin. (Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 2, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

**KAMA SUTRA**—In Mira Nair's fairy tale, set in sixteenth-century India, Indira Varma plays a poor sexpot who seduces the king, gets cast out of her home, becomes a courtesan, and finally falls in love with the court sculptor (Ramon Tikaram, a hunk who looks like a stocky Indian Fabio). The movie succeeds so beautifully as a feast for the senses (over and over, gorgeous bodies embrace, and the music throbs invitingly) that Nair, apparently, sees no need to make the characters or the dialogue interesting. Sarita Choudhury is Varma's princess rival, and Naveen Andrews camps it up as the snooty, sybaritic king.—S.K. (Lincoln Square.)

**KOLYA**—A likable enough Czech reworking of a tried-and-true formula: a sort of "Kramer vs. Kramer" set in Prague, in 1988-89, at the dawn of the Velvet Revolution. The screenwriter, Zdenek Svěrák, also plays the central character, a bachelor cellist whose lonely, impoverished life symbolizes the whole country's stagnation. In a moment of financial panic he



agrees to a young Russian woman's offer of money for marriage; she quickly emigrates, leaving him to care for her adorable five-year-old son. The cellist slowly grows out of his selfishness, and his love for this child who doesn't speak his language points to the new, boundaryless world that's about to open up. Directed by Jan Sverak. In Czech.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

**LOST HIGHWAY**—David Lynch's lurid, enigmatic thriller, co-written with Barry Gifford, decorates the characteristic sexual paranoia and ambient fatalism of film noir with touches of the fantastic, which seem intended to turn the genre's worn material inside out. For all the gore and sordid sex and frenzied vengeance, the whole thing feels unnaturally cool, tidy, and hermetic, like a "Tales from the Crypt" horror comic written by Robbe-Grillet. The problem with the movie, ultimately, is that it isn't conceived in the surrealist spirit of transgression, as Lynch's "Blue Velvet" (1986) was; it's just a vigorous exercise in deconstruction. This time, Lynch has given us something to talk about rather than something to dream about. With Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Robert Loggia, and Robert Blake.—T.R. (3/10/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

**MARVIN'S ROOM**—Jerry Zaks's strength-through-illness drama, adapted by the late Scott McPherson from his 1990 play. Bessie (Diane Keaton), who spends her time caring for her bedridden father (Hume Cronyn), discovers that she herself has leukemia; the search for a bone-marrow donor leads her to her sister, Lee (Meryl Streep), whom she hasn't seen in twenty years. Both women give it all they've got, but this cloying film doesn't deserve their generosity. Leonardo DiCaprio is highly convincing as Lee's dysfunctional son.—A.L. (1/20/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Regency, and Village East Cinemas. . . . Guild; through March 13.)

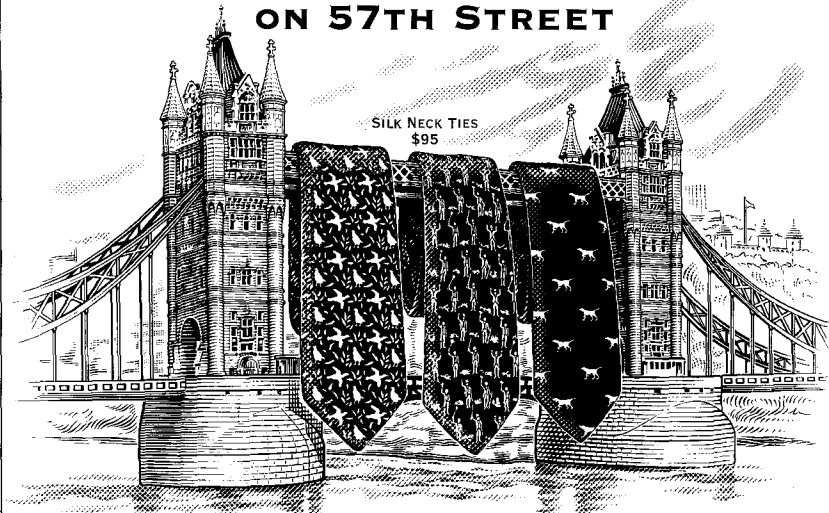
**PRISONER OF THE MOUNTAINS**—A picture set against the background of the war in Chechnya, about two Russian soldiers captured and held in the hope of an exchange of prisoners. The director, Sergei Bodrov, unfolds his hushed brotherhood-of-man story in a showy but poetic way, filming the mountains and wheat fields surrounding the prison encampment with an elegant expansiveness that suggests Lean or Kurosawa. While the tale, which was inspired by a Tolstoy story, has the Russian everything-is-doomed mentality, it's swiftly told and filled with moody, haunted, compellingly fresh and beautiful images. In Russian.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

**PRIVATE PARTS**—A comedy based on Howard Stern's 1993 autobiography, with Stern playing himself. Directed by Betty Thomas. (Astor Plaza, Baronet, Chelsea West, Coronet, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

**RHYME & REASON**—Peter Spier's documentary look at hip-hop music, featuring Ice-T, Dr. Dre, and Tupac Shakur. (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, 68th St. Playhouse, and Village East Cinemas.)

**ROSEWOOD**—John Singleton's disappointingly conventional account of the 1923 massacre of an all-black village in Florida. The trouble broke out when a white woman's false claim that a black man had beaten her unleashed a merciless lynch mob. You'd think that was drama enough, but Gregory Poirier's screenplay shamelessly rips off everything from spaghetti Westerns (with Ving Rhames playing a mysterious gunslinging hero) to "Schindler's List" (Jon Voight as a mean white shopkeeper who suddenly gets a soul). There's also a lot of one-dimensional propaganda for African-American self-sufficiency—but neither it nor the crassest Hollywood fiddling can keep the evil of what happened from coming through; this is one of those bad movies that are worth seeing anyway. With Esther Rolle as a saintly matriarch, Don Cheadle as her proud son, and a charming young actress, Elise Neal, as a sweet, gawky teen-age heroine.—S.K. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

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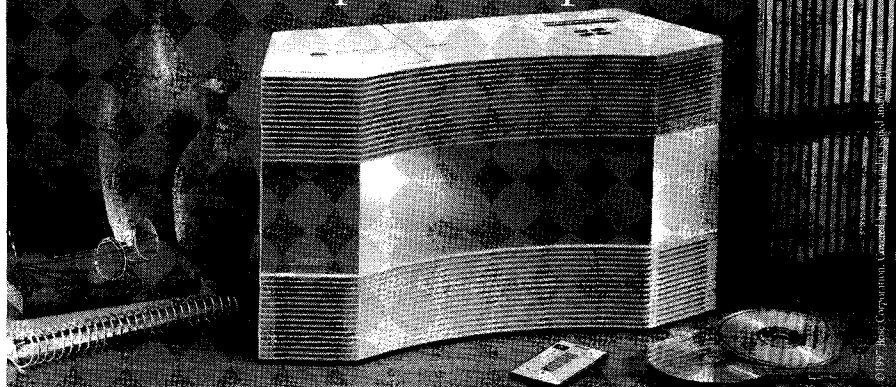
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**SCREAM**—An entertaining horror comedy in which the director Wes Craven and his scriptwriter, Kevin Williamson, take the clichés of fright films and reinvigorate them with a cheeky knowingness: the victims are horror-movie aficionados who in many instances make the same mistakes they've joked about seeing made on screen. With help from an unusually strong cast—Drew Barrymore, Neve Campbell, Courtney Cox, and David Arquette all do smashing work—Craven wrings some real thrills from the familiar perils of all those teen-age gorefests.—B.D. (State and Waverly.)

**SECRETS & LIES**—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film alto-

body could fall for its dim homilies. Thornton's performance as the slow-witted murderer whose heart is purer than any tobacco-chewing cracker's is excruciating, but the film does have two terrific actors—Dwight Yoakam, as the menacing boyfriend, and John Ritter, as a gay store manager—both of whom pick up entertainingly on small-town eccentricities. Thornton is capable of good work (he co-wrote and acted in the gritty, disturbing "One False Move"), but this is maudlin treacle of a kind that even "Forrest Gump" didn't stoop to.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

**SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW**—For a while, this adaptation of Peter Hoeg's 1993 best-seller plays as a ghost story. The director, Bille August, and his superb cinematographer, Jörgen Persson, lay on a wonderfully eerie, winter-light mood: chilly, hushed, uneasy. But the movie's spell begins to dissipate about halfway through, when the plot machinery required to resolve the mystery by non-supernatural means starts

mess up the story of the 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman; the drama is all there, ripe for the telling, and the director, Leon Gast, grabs the opportunity with both hands. To maintain the suspense, he enlists help from a wide range of Ali fans: George Plimpton, Spike Lee, and, above all, Norman Mailer, who talks about that night with the unabated excitement of a child.—A.L. (2/17/97) (Lincoln Square.)

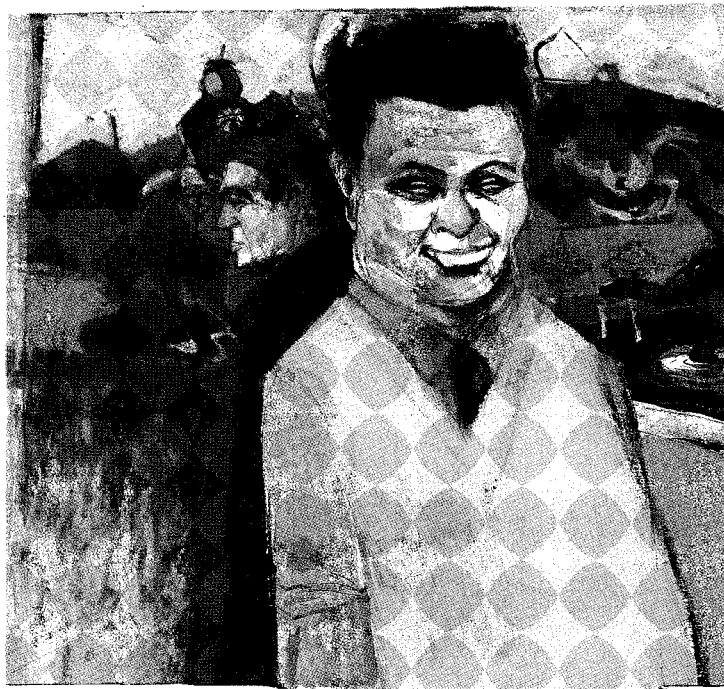
## ALSO PLAYING

**BOYS LIFE 2:** Quad Cinema. . . **LA CÉRÉMONIE** (reviewed in our issue of 1/20/97): Angelika 57. . . **THE CRUCIBLE** (12/2/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **DAYLIGHT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . **FARGO** (3/25/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **FIERCE CREATURES** (2/3/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **MARS ATTACKS!** (12/16/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **MICHAEL COLLINS** (10/14/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **RIDICULE:** 59th Street East Cinema and The Screening Room. . . **SUDDEN MANHATTAN:** 19th Street East 6. . . **UNFORGOTTEN: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER WILLOWBROOK:** Angelika 57.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

**ANGELIKA 57,** 225 W. 57th St.  
**ANGELIKA FILM CENTER,** 18 W. Houston St.  
**ART GREENWICH TWIN,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.  
**ASTOR PLAZA,** 44th St. at Broadway.  
**BARONET,** Third Ave. at 59th St.  
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**CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS,** Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.  
**CHELSEA CINEMAS,** 260 W. 23rd St.  
**CHELSEA WEST,** 333 W. 23rd St.  
**CINEMA I,** Third Ave. at 60th St.  
**CINEMA II,** Third Ave. at 60th St.  
**CINEMA 3RD AVENUE,** Third Ave. at 60th St.  
**CINEMA 3,** 2 W. 59th St.  
**CINEMA VILLAGE,** 22 E. 12th St.  
**CORONET,** Third Ave. at 59th St.  
**CRITERION CENTER,** Broadway at 44th St.  
**EAST 85TH STREET,** First Ave. at 85th St.  
**EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE,** Third Ave. at 55th St.  
**84TH STREET SIXPLEX,** Broadway at 84th St.  
**86TH STREET EAST TWIN,** Third Ave. at 86th St.  
**EMBASSY I,** Broadway at 46th St.  
**EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4,** Seventh Ave. at 47th St.  
**59TH STREET EAST CINEMA,** 239 E. 59th St.  
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**FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS,** 400 E. 62nd St.  
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**GUILD,** 33 W. 50th St.  
**LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS,** Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).  
**LINCOLN SQUARE,** Broadway at 68th St.  
**MANHATTAN TWIN,** Third Ave. at 59th St.  
**METRO CINEMA I AND 2,** Broadway at 99th St.  
**MURRAY HILL CINEMAS,** 160 E. 34th St.  
**NATIONAL TWIN,** Broadway at 44th St.  
**NEW YORK TWIN,** Second Ave. at 67th St.  
**19TH STREET EAST 6,** Broadway at 19th St.  
**OLYMPIA I AND II,** Broadway at 107th St.  
**ORPHEUM VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.  
**PARIS,** 4 W. 58th St.  
**PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS,** 125 E. 86th St.  
**QUAD CINEMA,** 34 W. 13th St.  
**REGENCY,** Broadway at 67th St.  
**THE SCREENING ROOM,** 54 Varick St. (334-2100).  
**62ND & BROADWAY,** 62 W. 62nd St.  
**64TH AND 2ND,** Second Ave. at 64th St.  
**68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE,** Third Ave. at 68th St.  
**72ND STREET EAST,** Third Ave. at 71st St.  
**STATE,** Broadway at 45th St.  
**SUTTON I AND 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.  
**34TH ST. EAST,** 241 E. 34th St.  
**34TH STREET SHOWPLACE,** 238 E. 34th St.  
**VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS,** Second Ave. at 12th St.  
**VILLAGE THEATRE VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.  
**WAYERLY I AND 2,** Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.  
**WORLDWIDE CINEMAS,** 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.  
**ZIEGFELD,** 141 W. 54th St.



Daniel Auteuil and Pascal Duquenne in "The Eighth Day."

gether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

**SHINE**—The hero of Scott Hicks's absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. Although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. Also with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, and John Gielgud (who's in especially buoyant comic form).—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Lincoln Square, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

**SLING BLADE**—Billy Bob Thornton's dunderheaded film about a simpleton who, released from an asylum for the criminally insane after serving twenty-five years for the murder of his mother and her lover, returns to his poor Southern home town and ends up befriending a small boy and defending him against his mom's abusive boyfriend. The picture's critical success is mystifying—it's hard to believe that any-

clanking so loudly that it can't be ignored. The screenplay, by Ann Biderman, takes Smilla, the detective heroine (Julia Ormond), from Copenhagen to Greenland, where she finds herself and the story loses itself: the fine suggestiveness of the movie's beginning collapses, like thin ice, under the weight of dumb shoot-outs, evil scientists, and breathless escapes. Also with Gabriel Byrne, Richard Harris, Robert Loggia, and Jim Broadbent.—T.R. (3/10/97) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

**WAITING FOR GUFFMAN**—If talent were enough, Christopher Guest's mock documentary about a small Missouri town celebrating its sesquicentennial would be one of the great recent comedies. Along with Guest, it stars such masterly offbeat character actors as Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, and Bob Balaban. But satire at this length needs a fresher, fairer target than pathetic small-town piety. Guest and Levy, the co-writers, seem to have had nothing in mind beyond the kind of characters they could work up; and, without any check on their instincts, the actors often fall back on meanness.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center.)

**THE WATERMELON WOMAN**—Cheryl Dunye wrote, directed, and stars in this story of a black lesbian aspiring filmmaker investigating the life of a black silent-film actress. (Film Forum.)

**WHEN WE WERE KINGS**—A foolproof documentary. Then again, it's hard to see how anyone could



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## REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** (1980)—By far the most imaginative part of the "Star Wars" trilogy. George Lucas kept the first movie hopping by cutting it into short, choppy scenes; Irvin Kershner, who directed this one, is a master of visual flow, and, joining his own kinks and obsessions to Lucas's, he gave "Empire" a splendiferousness that may even have transcended what Lucas had in mind. The characters in this fairy-tale cliffhanger show more depth of feeling than they had in the first film, and the music—John Williams's variations on the "Star Wars" theme—seems to saturate and enrich the intensely clear images; scenes linger in the mind. With Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, and Alec Guinness. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ♪ Ziegfeld; through March 13.)

**HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY** (1941)—John Ford's much honored movie about the decline of a Welsh mining family is moving and impressive in a big-Hollywood-picture way. Roddy McDowall and Walter Pidgeon are the leads, and the cast includes Maureen O'Hara, Sara Allgood, Barry Fitzgerald, and many other Irish actors (though the singers are really Welsh). (Museum of Modern Art; March 14-15.)

**LAWRENCE OF ARABIA** (1962)—Directed by David Lean, from a script by Robert Bolt, loosely based on T. E. Lawrence's "Seven Pillars of Wisdom," this picture fails to give an acceptable interpretation of Lawrence, or to keep its action intelligible, but it is one of the most literate and tasteful and exciting of expensive spectacles. The central figure is played quite stunningly by Peter O'Toole. Bolt and Lean turn the hero into such a flamboyant poetic enigma that he is displaced in the film by a simpler hero—Omar Sharif's Ali, a handsome sheik with liquid brown eyes and conventionally sympathetic lines to speak. Ali, an old-fashioned movie hero, was more at home in what, despite the literacy, was a big action movie. With Alec Guinness, José Ferrer, Anthony Quinn, Arthur Kennedy, Jack Hawkins, Claude Rains, Anthony Quayle, and Donald Wolfitt. (Museum of Modern Art; March 14 and March 16.)

**ON THE TOWN** (1949)—This musical about three sailors with twenty-four hours' leave in New York has an undeserved high reputation. Yes, Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Betty Garrett, Ann Miller, Jules Munshin, and Vera-Ellen (as Miss Subways) are all in it, and it's the Comden and Green musical with the remnants of the Bernstein score. But its exuberant love of New York seems forced, and most of the numbers are hearty and uninspired. Kelly and Stanley Donen choreographed and directed. (Symphony Space; March 18.)

**RETURN OF THE JEDI** (1983)—Some of the trick effects in this concluding film of the "Star Wars" trilogy might seem miraculous if the imagery had any lustre, but this is an impersonal and rather junky piece of movie-making. It's packed with torture scenes, and it bangs away at you. With Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, and Billy Dee Williams. Directed by Richard Marquand. Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas, based on Lucas's story; music by John Williams. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Ziegfeld; starting March 14.)

**STAR WARS** (1977)—The loudness, the smash-and-grab editing, and the relentless pacing drive every idea from your head, and even if you've been entertained, you may feel cheated of some dimension—a sense of wonder, perhaps. It's an epic without a dream. Maybe the only real inspiration involved was to set its sci-fi galaxy in the pop-culture past, and to turn old-movie ineptness into

conscious Pop art. The writer and director, George Lucas, has got the tone of bad movies down pat; you never catch the actors deliberately acting badly; they just seem to be bad actors, on contract to Monogram or Republic, their klunky enthusiasm polished at the Ricky Nelson school of acting. With Carrie Fisher as the princess-in-distress who talks tomboy-tough, Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker, Harrison Ford as Han Solo, and Alec Guinness as Ben Obi-Wan Kenobi. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, National Twin, and Orpheum VII.)

## LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

**FILM FORUM 2 AND 3**, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2**: Through March 13: "Le Samourai" (1967, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French). . . . ♪ A four-week program of films made in the twenties and thirties, before the Hays Code was strictly enforced. March 14-15: "Female" (1933, Michael Curtiz) and "Ex-Lady" (1933, Robert Florey). . . . March 16-17: "The Kiss" (1929, Jacques Feyder) and "A Woman of Affairs" (1928, Clarence Brown). . . . March 18: "Five and Ten" (1931, Robert Z. Leonard) and "Faithless" (1932, Harry Beaumont). . . . **THEATRE 3**: From March 14: "Le Samourai."

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—From the museum's archives, a series of Academy Award winners in the Best Picture category. March 13 at 2:30: "Wings" (1927, William

"The Double Life of Véronique" (1991; in French and Polish). . . . March 12 at 6: "Blue" (1993; in Polish and French). . . . March 12 at 7:50: "White" (1994; in French). . . . March 12 at 9:30 and March 13 at 4: "Red" (1994; in French). . . . ♪ A program of new French films; all in French, with English subtitles. March 14 at 2 and 6:30: "Ponette" (Jacques Doillon). . . . March 14 at 4 and 8:45 and March 15 at 6:45: "Un Air de Famille" (Cédric Klapisch). . . . March 15 at 4 and March 16 at 8:45: "Capitaine Conan" (Bertrand Tavernier). . . . March 15 at 9:15 and March 18 at 6:15: "Marianne" (Benoît Jacquot). . . . March 16 at 4 and March 18 at 4 and 8:30: "Encore" (Pascal Bonitzer). . . . March 16 at 6:30 and March 18 at 2: "L'Age des Possibles" (Pascale Ferran). . . . ♪ March 15-16 at 2: "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" (1989, Stephen Herek).

**FLORENCE GOULD HALL**, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A program of films about Vietnam. March 13 at 8 and March 16 at 7: "Poussière d'Empire" (1983, Lam-Le; in French and Vietnamese; no English subtitles). . . . March 14 at 8: "Starting Place" (1993, Robert Kramer; in English and Vietnamese). . . . March 14 at 10 and March 16 at 12:45: "From Hollywood to Hanoi" (1996, Tiana; in English, French, and Vietnamese). . . . March 16 at 2:30: "Nostalgia for the Countryland" (1996, Dang Nhat Minh; in Vietnamese). . . . March 16 at 9: "Dat Kho" (1975, Ha Thuc Can; in Vietnamese). . . . March 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Scent of Green Papaya" (1993, Tran Anh Hung; in Vietnamese).

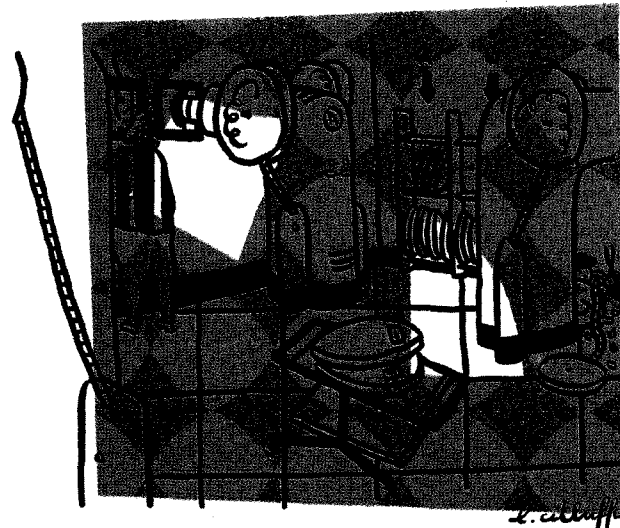
**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by Chantal Akerman; in French, with English subtitles. March 15 at 2: "Chantal Akerman by Chantal Akerman" (1997). . . . March 15 at 3:15: "The Eighties" (1983). . . . March 15 at 5: "Window Shopping" (1985). . . . March 16 at 12:30: "The Man with the Suitcase" (1983). . . . March 16 at 2: "Hotel Monterey" (1972). . . . March 16 at 4:30: "One Day Pina Asked Me" (1983) and "Moving In" (1993). **SYMPHONY SPACE**, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer. March 18 at 7:30: Amanda Green singing songs by Adolph Green and Betty Comden, followed by "On the Town" (†).

**A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE**, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-

night series of free films. On March 16 at 7, the feature will be "The Handmaid's Tale" (1990, Volker Schlöndorff).

**CINEMA VILLAGE**, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through March 13: "Out of the Past" (1947, Jacques Tourneur). . . . From March 14: A program of twelve films from the thirties and forties showing the dark side of Warner Bros. cartoons.

**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES**, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Films by Mike Leigh. March 12 at 6: "Grown Ups" (1980). . . . March 13 at 6:30: "Home Sweet Home" (1982). . . . March 18 at 7: "Four Days in July" (1985). . . . ♪ March 12 at 7 and March 13 at 6: "Sleepover" (1995, John Sullivan). . . . ♪ March 12 at 9:30, March 13 at 10, March 14 at 9:30, March 15 at 4:30 and 9:30, March 16 at 4 and 9:30, March 17 at 9:30, and March 18 at 9: "Dead Man" (1995, Jim Jarmusch). . . . ♪ A program of films by Luis Buñuel. March 14 at 8 and March 15-16 at 4 and 8: "Tristana" (1970). . . . March 14 at 10 and March 15-16 at 6 and 10: "Sunrise" (1955). . . . March 17 at 8 and 10: "Los Olvidados" (1950) and "Land Without Bread" (1932). . . . March 18 at 8: "The Great Madcap" (1949). . . . March 18 at 10: "The Brute" (1952).



Wellman). . . . March 13 at 6: "All Quiet on the Western Front" (1930, Lewis Milestone). . . . March 13 at 8:15: "Kramer vs. Kramer" (1979, Robert Benton). . . . March 14 at 2:30 and March 15 at 5: "How Green Was My Valley" (†). . . . March 14 at 6:30 and March 16 at 2: "Lawrence of Arabia" (†). . . . March 17 at 2:30: "All the King's Men" (1949, Robert Rossen). . . . March 17 at 6 and March 18 at 2:30: "Unforgiven" (1992, Clint Eastwood). . . . March 18 at 6: "Platoon" (1986, Oliver Stone). . . . ♪ A program of films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder; most in German, some with English subtitles. March 13 at 6: "Eight Hours Don't Make a Day," Episodes 1-2 (1972). . . . March 14 at 6: "Eight Hours Don't Make a Day," Episodes 3-5. . . . March 15 at 1 and March 16 at 5: "Like a Bird on a Wire" (1974). . . . March 15 at 2:30: "Nora Helmer" (1973). . . . March 15 at 5: "Women in New York" (1977). . . . March 16 at 2:30: "The Coffeehouse" (1970). . . . ♪ March 17 at 6:30: "50 Feet of String" (1995), directed by Leighton Pierce, who will be present.

**WALTER READE THEATRE**, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films by Krzysztof Kieslowski. March 12 at 2: "Blind Chance" (1981; in Polish). . . . March 12 at 4 and March 13 at 2:



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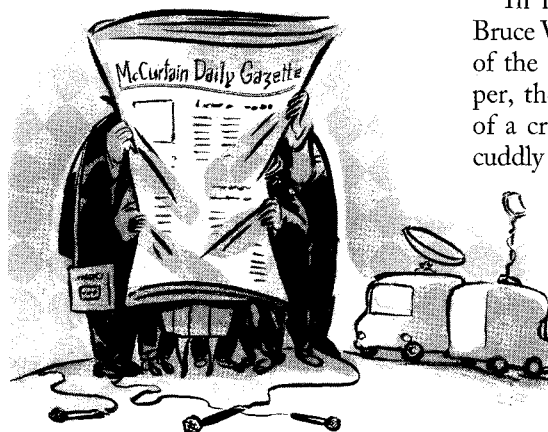
## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### OKLAHOMA SCOOPS

**M**ORE and more people are paying attention to the news coming out of Idabel, Oklahoma. A small timber town in the southeast corner of the state, Idabel is home to the *McCurtain Daily Gazette*, a county paper that, for some time now, has been scooping the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, the A.P., CNN, and the networks with stories—mixed in with local reports of gospel singings, cattle prices, and school-lunch menus—about the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in Oklahoma City, which took a hundred and sixty-eight lives two years ago in April. Last week, the *Gazette* was in the national news because of rumors that its reporter on the case was the source of what the *Dallas Morning News* had published as a confession by the chief bombing suspect, Timothy McVeigh. The *Gazette* not only denied the rumors but declared that the confession was a hoax designed to smoke out a potential witness—a charge that was confirmed by Stephen Jones, McVeigh's attorney in Denver, where the bombing trial is scheduled to start on March 31st.

This was all quite heady for a newspaper with a circulation of only sixty-five hundred, but its reporter J. D. Cash, whose entire journalistic career has been devoted to the bombing, seemed to take it in stride. In covering the labyrinthine investigation into the case, Cash, a forty-four-year-old Tulsan who had had a successful career in real estate and banking, has written some sixty stories on the subject, many of them controversial. Last September, a series of Cash articles placed McVeigh in a Tulsa topless bar eleven days before the explosion, boasting to a

stripper that "on April 19, 1995, you'll remember me for the rest of your life!" The exotic dancer was reported to have identified in photographs McVeigh and two friends from Elohim City, a white-separatist compound east of Tulsa. In January, Cash and the *Gazette* printed excerpts from an F.B.I. statement given by McVeigh's sister, in which she confessed to having laundered stolen money at her brother's request. Just a few weeks ago, the paper came out with its most provoca-



tive revelation to date. This Cash exclusive quoted one Carol E. Howe to the effect that, as a paid informant for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms on activities at Elohim City, she had warned of plans to target various federal buildings, among them the one in Oklahoma City. (Howe's statement remains unconfirmed, and the A.T.F. has refused to comment, citing a gag order by the judge in the case.)

Many of Cash's scoops have been picked up by the more powerful media, with grudging, sometimes skeptical acknowledgment. A *Washington Post* story last week described Cash as a "conspiracy theorist" while granting that a number of his "major" articles have "held

up." The credibility of some of Cash's sources—notably Howe—has been questioned, as has the degree of his own involvement. (It was a private investigator for the McVeigh defense who had showed Cash the purported "confession" while they were travelling to meet with members of the far right last year.) Still, on one of the country's biggest stories the media establishment has found itself trailing a news organization with just seven reporters on its payroll.

In his office on Central Avenue, Bruce Willingham, the owner-publisher of the *Gazette* (and a smaller sister paper, the *News*), scarcely looks the part of a crusader. Soft-spoken and rather cuddly in appearance, Willingham, who is forty-two, was a reporter for the *Gazette* and a part-time chicken farmer when he bought the two papers, in 1988. It was a big jump, he says, from fryers to publishing, but he had been the editor of his school paper in Asheville, North Carolina, and had taken

writing classes at Chapel Hill. Under Willingham, who says that his favorite writer is still Mark Twain, the *Gazette* became popular for its "Call the Editor" column, which invites readers to sound off. (A recent correspondent wrote, "There are several negative names that come to mind when I think of Joe Bob. . . . What is the definition of dung beetle?") Politically, Willingham describes himself as a conservative on fiscal matters, a progressive on racial and social issues.

The *Gazette* hadn't raised its sights much beyond McCurtain County until Cash, who looks a bit like Harry Dean Stanton, appeared in Willingham's office, ten days after the bombing, with



an article based on interviews with technical experts and with witnesses who had been at the site of the explosion. Cash quoted an assistant fire marshal who claimed to have seen a bomb squad leaving the building with unexploded munitions after the blast. The article speculated that the matériel might have been part of a government arsenal whose presence contributed to the bomb damage. Willingham took Cash on after checking his sources and satisfying himself that his new reporter had no hidden agenda. Cash's journalistic debut was awarded a statewide prize for investigative reporting.

In national stories about the *Morning News* controversy last week, it was pointed out that several of Cash's articles had been reprinted in *Jubilee*, a publication of the Christian Identity movement. Cash says that he gave permission to reprint them simply to gain access to far-right sources. "Anyone who implies that I am a neo-Nazi is a liar or a fool," he added, mentioning that he has received at least one threat from the "paranoid right." For now, he said, he has no higher ambition than to continue coming up with scoops for the *Gazette*. "Talking to those militia guys, if you told them you were from the New York Times they'd either shun you or likely shoot you," he said. "Me, they don't worry about."

## SILENCE OF THE LAMB

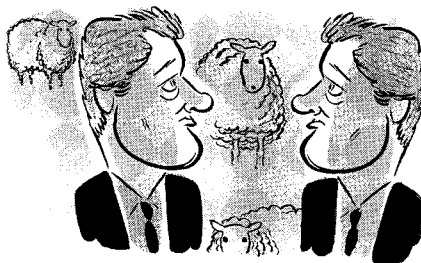
UNTIL Dolly the cloned sheep came along, Roslin was a dozy Scottish village rejoicing in its ordinari-ness. Situated in the heart of Midlothian, near Edinburgh, it boasts a couple of castles in the neighborhood, including Hawthornden, the former home of the Elizabethan poet William Drummond, which is now a writers' retreat. There is also Roslin Chapel, which draws pilgrims for its architecture and an association with the mysterious Knights Templar. But Dolly, as they say in these parts, is another kettle of fish altogether.

One day last week, not long after the world learned of the Roslin Institute's success in cloning Dolly, using cells taken from a six-year-old ewe, scientists at the facility declared a "media-free

day." Researchers, who had been surprised to find themselves under the microscope of the international press, were locked in their labs. Dolly herself was not around, even to say hello. The fields surrounding the institute were powdered with snow, and empty. Dr. Ian Wilmut, the beer-drinking, bearded front man for the project, had gone to ground; he has had an unlisted home number since the institute was targeted by animal-rights protesters, in 1989.

In the bar at the Roslin Glen Hotel, the regulars professed to know little of Dolly beyond her name. Had the village been affected by her discovery? "You mean like Chernobyl?" one man said, taking a deep swig from his pint of beer. "You see what effect that had on sheep, running around with six legs and the like. There's bound to be some fallout." When it was remarked that Dolly was hardly comparable to a nuclear disaster, he acknowledged, "Maybe you're right, but who can tell?" Informed that President Clinton had called for a report on the ethical and legal implications of Dolly and the possibilities of cloning human beings, the beer drinker, who declined to be named lest his wife find out where he was, responded with a grimace. "Who in the name of hell would want to clone Clinton?" he belched.

Over in the rectory, the local Church of Scotland minister, the Reverend Mr. James Manson, confessed that, teleologically, Dolly was not a particularly hot



topic in the area. He himself had not yet felt it necessary to base one of his sermons on her. As for the cloning of human beings, his wife, for one, was steadfastly against it. But, surely, he was asked, the Bible offered some guidance on the matter? The good minister paused for thought, then remembered that he had indeed slipped a topical reference into the previous Sunday's sermon, when he'd intoned, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

## FACING THE MUSIC

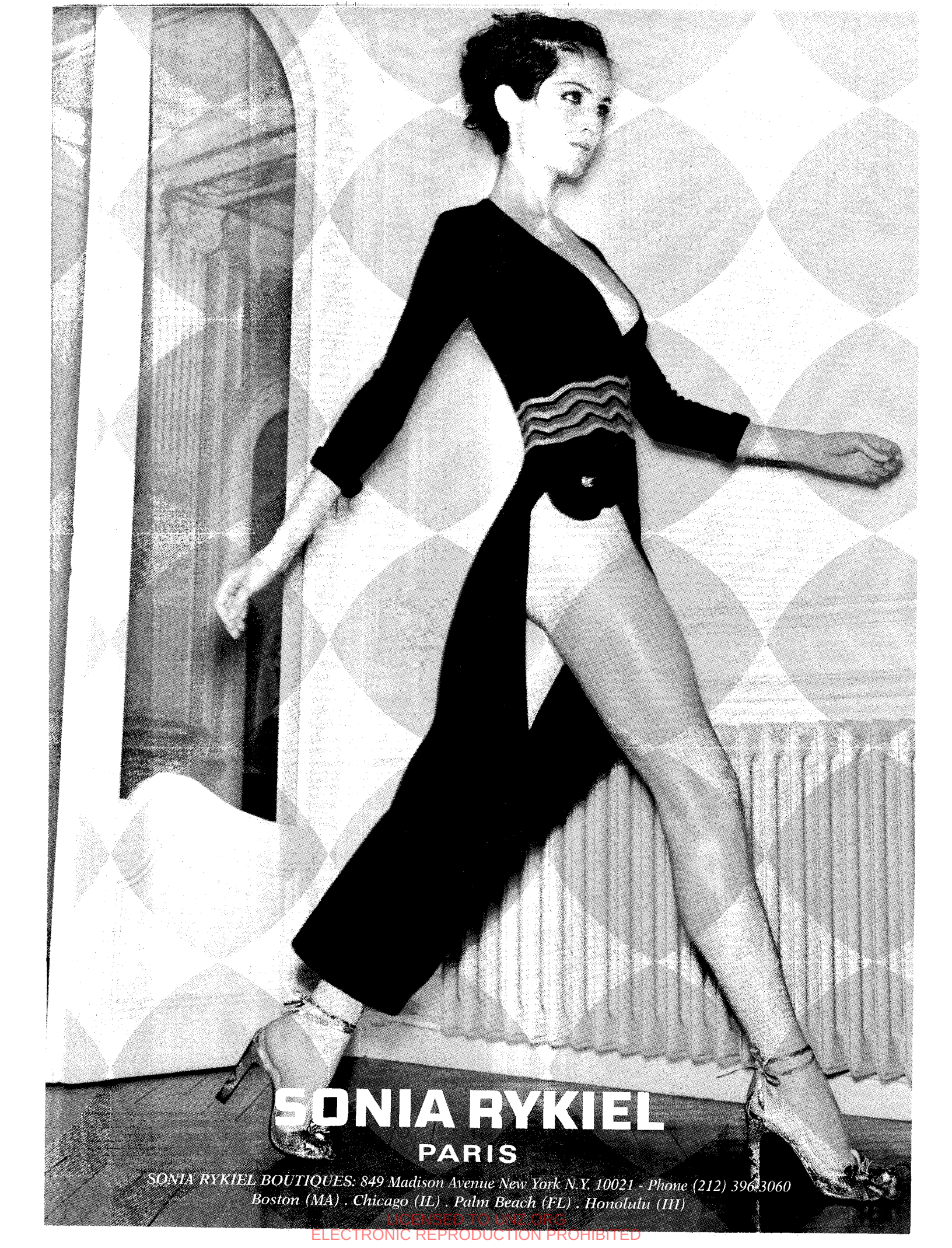
TO the joy of the city's dance fans, the recent season of the Paul Taylor Dance Company went on as advertised, but it was a near thing. Until the afternoon of the opening night, at City Center, the company wasn't sure it would have musicians in the pit. Taylor, after three years of giving performances to taped music, a practice he abhors, had engaged the New York Metamorphoses Orchestra to play for his two-week season, and had advertised the fact. The Metamorphoses, composed mostly of recent music-school graduates, is a new—and nonunion—orchestra. As rehearsals got under way, its members began hearing from Local 802 of the Musicians' Union. The local thought that the Taylor company and the orchestra should sign long-term union contracts with set pay scales. But the company couldn't afford to pay union-scale wages, which have been rising steeply for the last few years.

Taylor, who had been hiring union musicians for twenty years before he ended up using taped scores, believed, as he said later, that the time had come to take a stand. "I saw it as a moral issue, not just an artistic one. These union demands create a false division—it's like art versus labor—and this is very, very dangerous for art." While Taylor had always been willing to meet with union representatives, he intended to carry on with the season as planned. The union said no dice.

Union pressure can be harrowing: threats, fights, tears. Even after Taylor's lawyers agreed to a compromise solution, the young musicians were still going through their own crisis. Eugene Sirotkine, the orchestra's founder and conductor, was faced with a long-range decision whether to unionize, which to him meant a choice between artistic freedom and having to play commercial gigs to cover the cost of a union band. On the day of the dress rehearsal, 802 threw a picket line outside the City Center stage door. The members of the orchestra would have crossed it out of loyalty to Sirotkine, but word came just in time that he had signed an agreement similar to Taylor's, which amounts to a pledge to







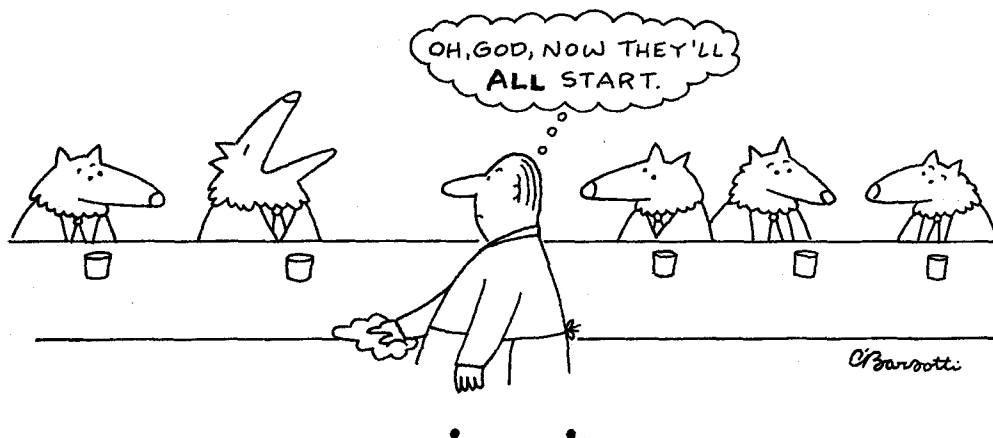
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unionize in the near future, terms and wages to be discussed. The union had stepped down a bit, and the Taylor season was salvaged.

For a musical choreographer not to have live music is a serious deprivation. As Taylor says, with an orchestra the dancers listen more carefully and respond more vividly. "Live music is for the theatre; canned music is for restaurants and elevators." But live music was only the immediate issue: what's still at stake is the cost of producing dance in New York. This is something the union has not shown much concern for in the past. Now, however, it has signed an agreement with the Taylor company expressing its wish to find a long-term solution. A statement from Bill Moriarty, the president of 802, set a hopeful tone for negotiations: "Our ongoing understanding is that both public and private funding for arts groups has suffered in the past five years or so, and any agreement that we reach with the Paul Taylor company will be informed by that understanding."

So far, so good. The drama behind the Taylor season could prove to be the beginning of a new accord between more practical performing artists and less recalcitrant and ham-handed union officials, but we may never know unless something catalyzes the situation. Now might be a good time for the Giuliani administration to set up a special commission to oversee better relations between the two sides; if only in the interests of cultural tourism, the city has a role to play. It was small dance companies like Taylor's that helped make New York the cultural capital of the world not so long ago. Nowadays New York has less and less to show for itself. Those same dance companies find themselves fighting, on a bare subsistence level, for standards of quality that they once

took for granted. (Like Taylor, the Alvin Ailey company has taken to advertising live music as a special attraction.) Too often, the orchestra pit is dark. How long before the stage is, too?

## THE ANSWER MAN

A COLD rain was beating down on Washington early one recent weekend morning when Lanny Davis, a special White House counsel who is the President's chief spokesman on the soft-money scandals, called back. He apologized for phoning at eight o'clock, then explained, "My pager has gone off twelve times in the last hour and it's Saturday. I'm trying to sneak in some calls before my wife wakes up and takes an axe and ends it all."

Davis, more than most foot soldiers in the Beltway wars, had good reason for feeling vulnerable. He had just survived the worst week so far in a brief career that has been unusually stressful. Scarcely had the press finished chewing on the latest evidence of fund-raising zeal by Harold M. Ickes, the former deputy chief of staff, when the overreager hospitality of the President himself was revealed in the memo that turned the Lincoln Bedroom into a B. and B. For the past several months, Davis had been on duty from seven-thirty in the morning until well into the night, taking more than a hundred calls a day, preparing statements for the media, and appearing on talk shows—all in the service of putting the best face possible on the latest Clinton mortification. He was still smarting from the moment on "Nightline" when his reference to the more than nine hundred people who had spent nights in the White House

as the President's "friends" had prompted Ted Koppel to exclaim, "I don't see anything in the . . . President's notation referring to 'friends.' This is strictly money that we're talking about here." Davis now insisted plaintively, "I actually said 'friends and supporters,' and Koppel kept saying 'friends.'"

Davis is a fifty-one-year-old lawyer who was enjoying a partner's life as a litigator in the Washington firm of Patton Boggs when he was tapped for the White House, last November. He had twice run unsuccessfully for Congress and put in twelve years on the Democratic National Committee before catching the White House's attention with television appearances as a Clinton defender. When his predecessor, Mark Fabiani, quit just as Whitewater was metastasizing into the current mess, Davis stepped into a job that had been turned down by various other lawyers around town.

Davis maintains that since Fabiani's departure the job has got tougher, with the rate of White House embarrassments seemingly on an exponential rise. "I wouldn't call them 'scandals,'" he said, referring to Whitewater and related matters. "I'll call them 'problems' with a beginning, middle, and probable end. What I'm dealing with is a series of issues that are literally geometric. Every issue that comes up leads to ten new ones, and those ten lead to another ten. It's created a seamless, endless demand for information."

Not the least of Davis's trials is constant grumbling by the press and White House aides that he is too starry-eyed for the job. Why, then, does he stay? One reason, he said, is to be found in his first name, which was inspired by his mother's fondness for the hero of the Upton Sinclair series of the forties, Lanny Budd, an international dogooder who rubbed shoulders with real-life figures like Winston Churchill and F.D.R. Another reason is the influence of his father, an unshakable Democrat who died two months before Davis was named special counsel. "He taught me an appreciation for politics as a noble activity—which is contrary to what most people think today," his son said. ♦

*"Oklahoma Scoops," Darcy O'Brien; "Silence of the Lamb," Alan Taylor; "Facing the Music," Arlene Croce; "The Answer Man," Mary Jacoby.*



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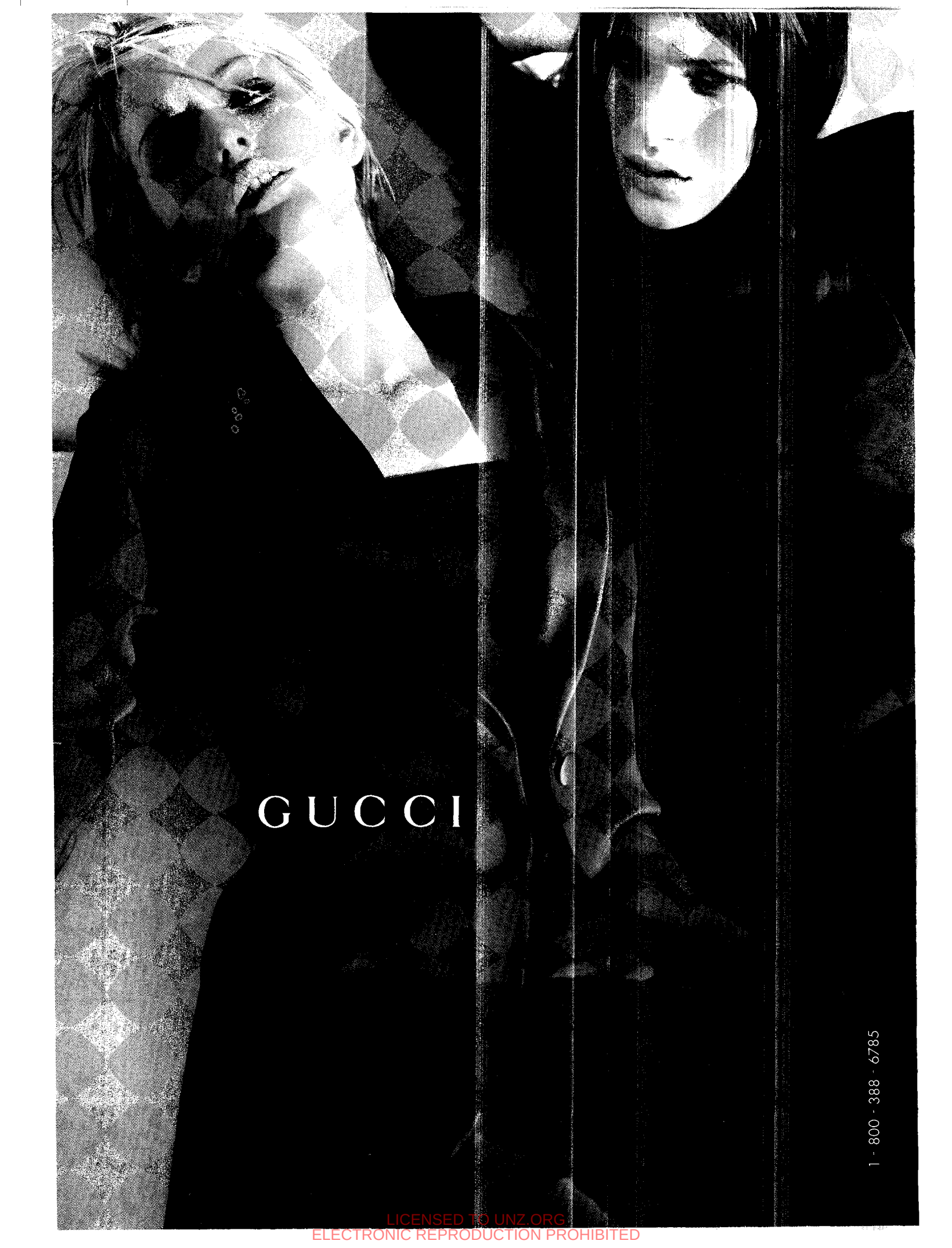
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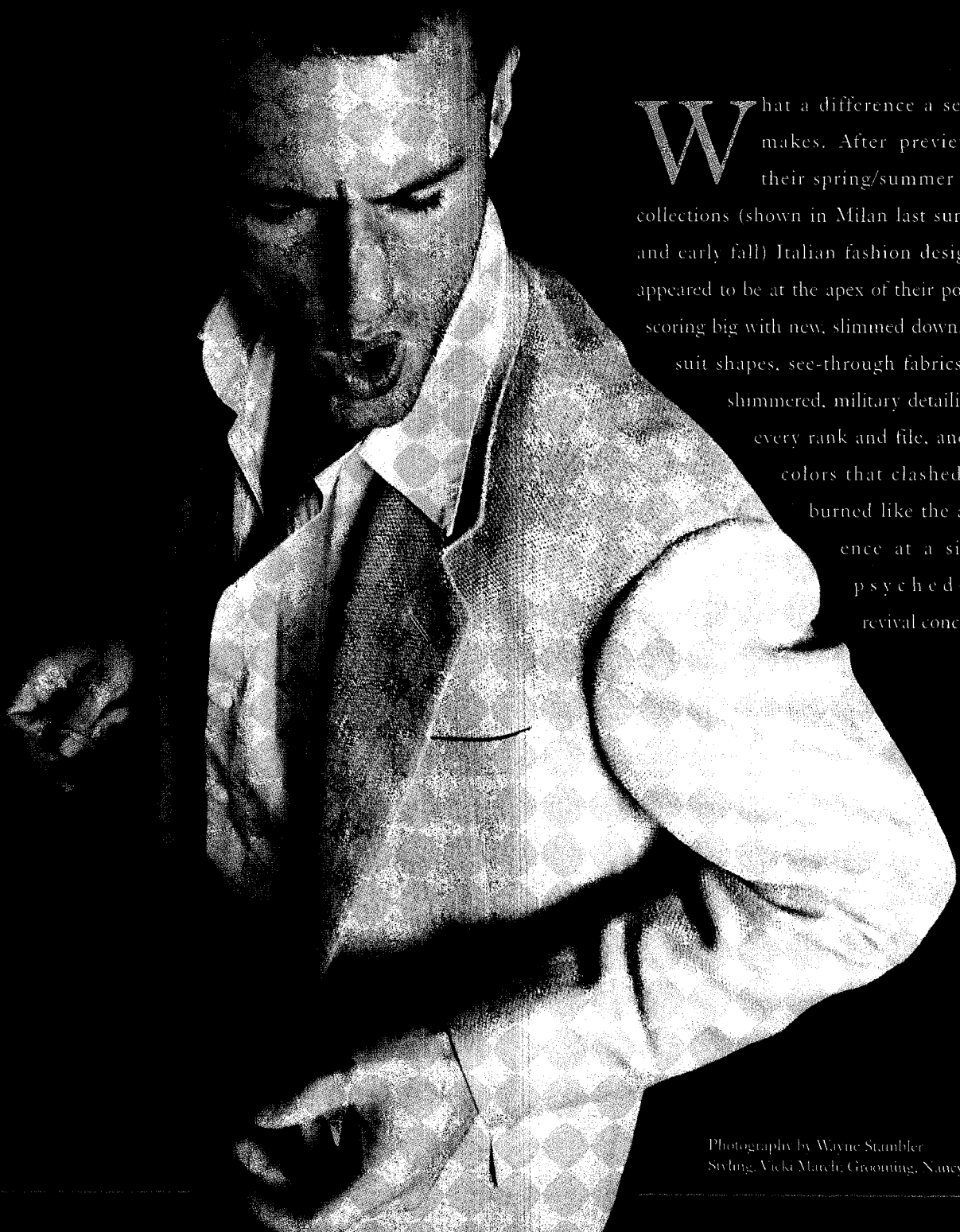
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# ITALIAN STYLE

by Ralph DiGennaro



What a difference a season makes. After previewing their spring/summer 1997 collections (shown in Milan last summer and early fall) Italian fashion designers appeared to be at the apex of their powers, scoring big with new, slimmed down, sexy suit shapes, see-through fabrics that shimmered, military detailing of every rank and file, and hot colors that clashed and burned like the audience at a sixties psychedelic revival concert.

Photography by Wayne Stambler  
Styling, Vicki March; Grooming, Nancy Schall





Indeed, that BUZZ, that seemingly ubiquitous Italian fashion BUZZ, could practically be heard on every street corner in Milan. American buyers and the New York fashion press contemplated the impending Milanese retail invasion of Madison and Fifth avenues. Not that the likes of Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Valentino, and Salvatore Ferragamo didn't already have a presence on New York City's toniest thoroughfares. But the new ventures would be BIG...BIGGER...BIGGEST. Armani, with unprecedented one-upmanship, opened two huge boutiques on Madison Avenue in the same week, and then pronounced fashion "dead" when he gave an interview to a local magazine. This was chutzpah as weighty as a hefty wedge of *lasagna al forno*, and every bit as saucy. If Armani's startling pronouncement gave his new store-owner compatriots indigestion, no matter, it set off that Italian fashion BUZZ all over again. As 1996 came to a close, "Buon Natale" was heard by New Yorkers as often as "Merry Christmas." Italian fashion was hotter than *peperoncini*.

*Cover:*

Ermengildo Zegna's pale green-toned silk/linen/wool sport jacket with canary silk shantung sport shirt.

*Top left:* Calé au lait leather zip front shirt with chocolate linen plain-front trousers and leather sandals, all by Gucci.

*Far right:* Gianfranco Ferré's rayon/viscose candy-stripe, double-breasted suit with rayon shirt.

*Right:* L'acné cotton collared pullover in cern with matching linen trousers from Salvatore Ferragamo. Shoes by Tanno Crisci.





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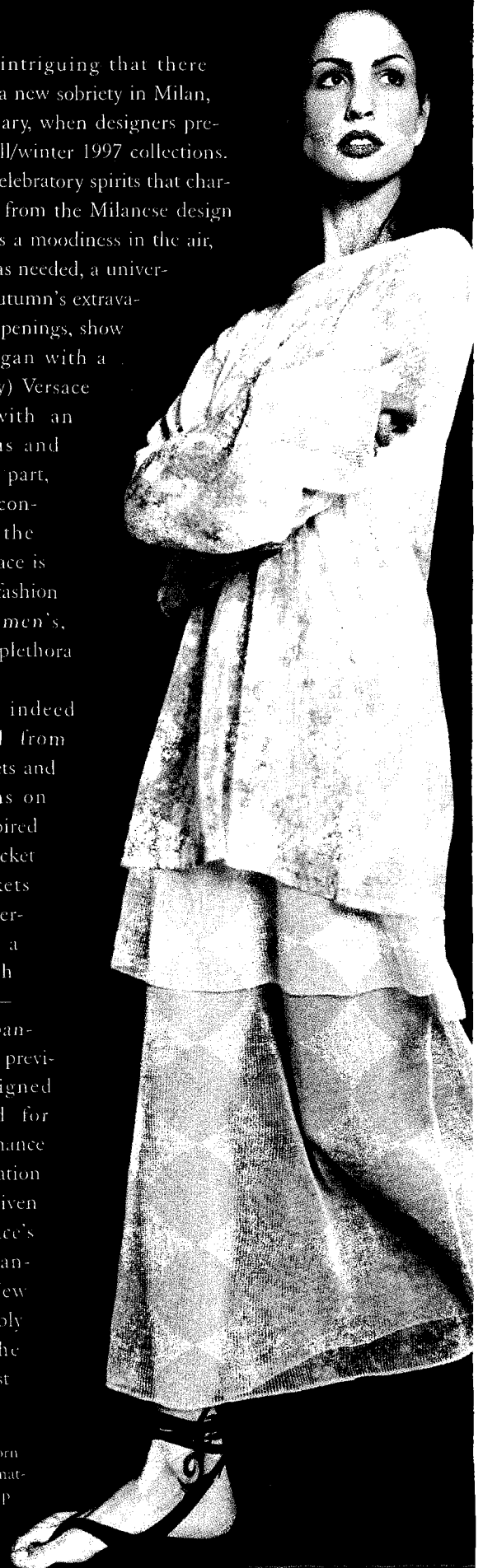


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All the more intriguing that there seemed to be a new sobriety in Milan, this past January, when designers previewed their men's fall/winter 1997 collections. Gone were the high, celebratory spirits that characteristically emanate from the Milanese design community. There was a moodiness in the air, a sense that change was needed, a universal rethinking. After autumn's extravagant New York store openings, show week in January began with a restrained (yet newsy) Versace collection, along with an equally sober Versus and Istante. For the most part, this trend remained consistent throughout the week. That said, Versace is incapable of staging a fashion show, men's or women's, without launching a plethora of new ideas.

While there was indeed news for next fall from Milan—fly-front jackets and coats, fuller bottoms on trousers, English-inspired detailing with slant ticket pockets on suit jackets and sport coats, tighter-than-tight sweaters, a preoccupation with white for winter—clearly the design abandon so apparent in the previous season was reigned in, as if the need for increased sales performance superseded the inclination to make headlines. Given the opulence of Versace's new Fifth Avenue mansion, his stakes in New York are understandably high. In short, the Italian designers almost

*Right: Sheer double tulle worn over flax mesh skirt, both in natural, and platform, ankle-wrap sandals, all from Krizia.*





certainly will need retail success stateside in the months ahead to shore up their fashion front on Madison and Fifth avenues. But, the BUZZ must go on.

One of the major trends in the Italian spring/summer 1997 collections was the surplus of military detailing shown on runways. But in the new fall collections, epauletts, which commanded so much attention last spring, were missing in action, along with sailor's pants, boots, military stripes, envelope or cargo pockets, and gun-patch ribbed sweaters. What a difference a season makes.

Best about the spring Italian collections — clean, leaner lines, crisp tailoring, slim yet sensible shapes, soft fabrics with texture, sophisticated color mixes, and comfortable (if tight fitting) knits. Plain-front pants prevailed.

More on target than ever before is Gianfranco Ferré, whose own collection (along with his secondary lines manufactured under license with Marzotto SpA) manages to embrace the new direction men's fashion is taking without going to unwearable extremes. A man with an exceptional eye for balance and proportion, Ferré's undeniable personal taste and sense of style is very much in the details. Perhaps his recent exit from Dior will be Milan's gain.

The deep, earthy tones of the new spring/summer collection, particularly as applied to solid cotton and silk shirts; plain-front, slim, flared-bottom trousers; and

ribbed knits, look particularly new and modern. And while Gucci may deserve credit for turning the dark, solid, cotton dress shirt into a fashion art form, other Italian designers have seized the look and developed it further.

Brioni, on the other hand, has added a range of unusual prints

*Left:* Multicolor, fish print rayon shirt paired with grass green linen, pleated trousers, both by Brioni Sport. Leather driving shoes by J.P. Tod.

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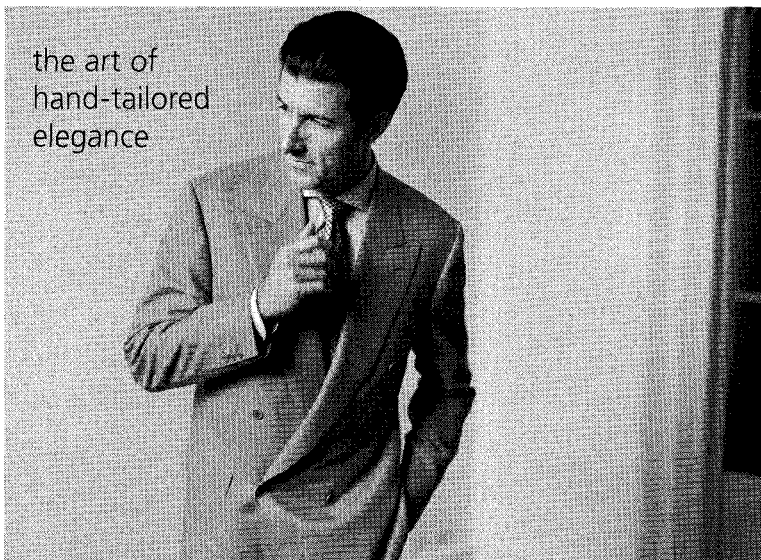
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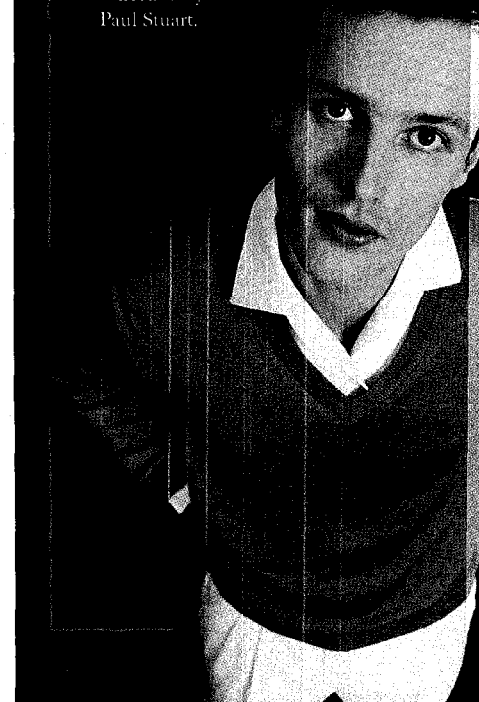
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to its Brioni Sport collection, which includes trousers in unusual tones, either plain or pleated. Likewise for Ferragamo, where great-looking sportswear is paired with fine tailoring for a look that brings the country into town. New York retailer Paul Stuart has also achieved this style with a new clothing line, Stuart's Choice, tailored in Italy from the finest European fabrics. The driving force in Krizia's men's and women's collections for spring/summer was also fabric. Designer Mariuccia Mandelli has worked sheer, see-through mesh into comfortable shapes that would welcome warm weather breezes, whether they blow from upper Madison Avenue or the aqua seas off Barbuda where the season does, indeed, make a difference. ●

*Below:* Azalea, merino wool V-neck, worn with cotton piqué "Cooper" shirt and cream, Tasmanian wool crepe trousers from the Stuart's Choice collection by Paul Stuart.





LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

## CLINTONS ON THE BRAIN

*Will this be their legacy?*

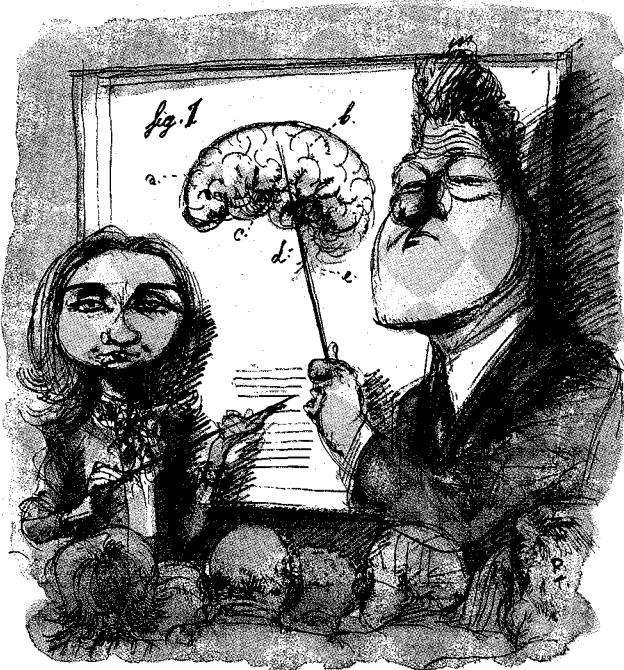
BY JOE KLEIN

ON the morning of February 21st, Bill and Hillary Clinton visited a cheerful classroom at William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School, a few miles from the White House, and read "The Tortoise and the Hare" to a group of first graders, most of whom were African-American. The President and the First Lady each held a copy of the book, and took turns reading. As one read, the other would show the page to the students, who sat on the floor, clustered around them. Despite the tangle of cameras, cables, reporters, and Secret Service agents in the back of the room, there was an ease and grace in the Clintons' performance: it was clearly something they'd done before. When they finished the story, the First Lady asked, "What did you learn from this book?" And, rather than solicit an answer from one of the eager readers in the front of the class, she looked to the more reticent souls in the back.

"Some turtles run fast," one boy said. The First Lady tried another boy. "Sometimes the tortoise wins," he said. There was an awkward silence. No one offered the obvious answer, and so the First Lady explained, "It's a lot like reading. If you do it slowly and carefully, and just keep at it, you can succeed, just like the tortoise did. You can win the race."

The moment was doubly poignant. The children were trying so hard and seemed so enthusiastic, but learning to read was going to be a struggle for more than a few of them. The Clintons were trying hard, too. Indeed, they have been very persistent about promoting their edu-

cation initiative, which is supposed to be the policy centerpiece of their second term. After visiting the classroom, they went on to the school's auditorium and announced that Washington-area colleges had made a commitment to provide hundreds of reading mentors for the city's el-

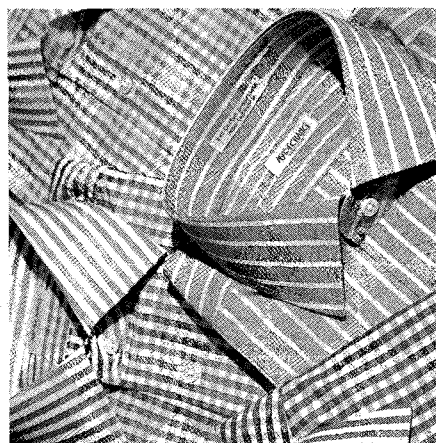


*Two provocative White House education initiatives—they are arguably "his" and "hers"—may set off a national ruckus.*

mentary schools. It was a direct and tangible—and undeniably worthy—result of steady Presidential exhortation. Since the Inauguration, the President and the First Lady have each been out at least once a week—she visiting schools and early-education programs, he addressing state legislatures about the need to join his campaign for national reading and math standards. On March 6th, Michigan's Governor John Engler, a Republican, pledged to do so, which was a significant victory for the President.

The intensity—and mutuality—of the Clintons' interest in this topic has only one precedent: their campaign for universal health-insurance coverage, in 1994. Obviously, this crusade isn't as risky. Few

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Republicans have even bothered to attack the program as a White House "scheme" to "federalize" education policy. And the media's interest, which was never great, evaporated almost immediately after the plan was announced in the President's State of the Union Message—a consequence of scandal mania and the reflexive narcolepsy that results whenever the words "education" and "initiative" are uttered in tandem. On the evening of February 21st, the Clintons' school visit—and mentor announcement—didn't dent the network news: the big story that night was Kenneth Starr's decision not to quit as the Whitewater independent counsel.

In fact, there seems to be remarkably little interest in the political community about *anything* substantive that the President intends to do in his second term. An insidious assumption about priorities has begun to seep through official Washington: the rest of this spring will be about the campaign-finance scandals (and, perhaps, the congressional effort to balance the budget). But official Washington has rarely seemed more remote from the rest of the country. Bill Clinton is at the peak of his popularity—around sixty per cent, in most polls. He has repeatedly insisted that education is his top priority. "You can feel it whenever he talks privately about this stuff," an aide says. "This is it. This is his legacy." And so, perhaps, it deserves a closer look.

That requires some effort. Clinton undercut the admirable qualities of his education plan by presenting it as a laundry list of ten items stuffed into his State of the Union Message, which was delivered while much of the country was channel-surfing in search of the second O. J. Simpson verdict. He spent nearly half an hour on it, but it sounded stale—a campaign leftover, the items "bite-size" and poll-driven. The most expensive program, and the one closest to controversial, was his plan to give \$36.1 billion in college-tuition tax benefits. The public loves this idea; few politicians with a pulse will vote against it. (Most education experts think it's a waste of money, since a greater percentage of Americans already attend college than young people in any other country do.) There were also the usual pleas for more money for Head Start and safe schools and "character education" and local school construction.

But embedded in the boilerplate were two substantive ideas that could cause a ruckus. They were, arguably, "his" and "hers" education initiatives—the President's and the First Lady's personal cru-

sades. *His* was the proposal for rigorous national math and reading standards, which contained an impressive acronym familiar only to education experts: NAEP, for National Assessment of Educational Progress—a group of tests that have found startling numbers of American children to be subliterate and innumerate in recent years. *Hers* was barely mentioned in the speech, but it is at the heart of the "early learning" initiative and seems to be the education fetish of the moment in precincts as disparate as Washington and Hollywood: a fascination with new scientific research on the intellectual and emotional development of infants, which will lead, in April, to a meeting that aides have taken to calling, sometimes without even raising their eyebrows, "the White House Conference on the Brain."

A FEW hours after the President and the First Lady read "The Tortoise and the Hare," and a few blocks away, Colin Powell sat in a television studio made to look like a child's bedroom and read "Goodnight Moon" to his two-year-old grandson, Brian. He read wonderfully; Brian was pretty terrific, too, pointing to the kittens and snuggling against his grandfather. The director, Rob Reiner, and his wife, Michele Singer-Reiner, watched the scene on a video monitor and then glanced at each other with tears in their eyes. "I don't think we'll need a second take," Reiner said.

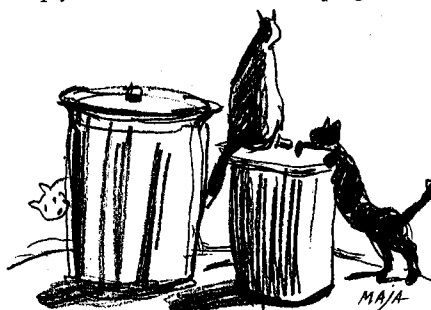
"Goodnight Moon" will be the final scene of an hour-long program about early-childhood development which ABC will broadcast on April 28th, around the time that the White House brain conference may take place. Both events coincide with a national "Early Childhood Public Engagement" campaign that is being coordinated this spring by a New York-based nonprofit group called the Families and Work Institute. A special edition of *Newsweek*, which will be available at newsstands for several weeks, will also be part of the effort. Reiner has been deeply involved with the campaign. His

interest in the subject, he acknowledges—with a candor peculiar to the west side of Los Angeles—grew out of nine years of daily psychoanalysis. "I realized that what happened to me in the first three years of my life was absolutely critical, for good and not so good, to how I dealt with the world and relationships and my work," he said. "I began to think that other people should have this information, too. It's important for parents to know how important the first few years are."

Reiner's psychoanalysis coincided with a number of biochemical and behavioral studies that proved, with scientific precision, most everything your grandmother assumed to be true about child-rearing: that it's crucial for babies to be hugged, talked to, sung to, read to, and adored. Those who don't get the physical attention suffer; those who are abused or neglected can be physiologically damaged for life.

Another pilgrim who came early to this information was Hillary Rodham Clinton, who wrote about it in her book "It Takes a Village." Indeed, all questions about the brain conference are directed by the White House press office to the First Lady's staff. Few are answered: there is no guest list, and no agenda, and not even a specific date for the conference yet.

"The policy implications are absolutely clear," said Reiner, who has schooled himself in this subject—he recently addressed the National Governors' Association about it—and is working in loose conjunction with the White House. He rattled off a list of early-education programs that need to be funded. The First Lady cites more than a few programs in her book, too. And it's true that programs like Healthy Start, which offers child-care advice to poor mothers in some states, seem to have been very useful. But there is another policy "implication" that may prove disturbing for a great many two-wage-earner and single-parent families. The research is pretty clear: it's much better for an infant to have a parent—almost inevitably, a mother—at home for at least the first few years of the infant's life. "Most women go back to work before they want to," says Ellen Galinsky, the president of the Families and Work Institute and a crusader for better day care, who understands the limits of the possible. Her group has studied the effects of smaller group size and better training for day-care workers in Florida: only about twenty-six per cent of the child-care situations there were considered stimulating





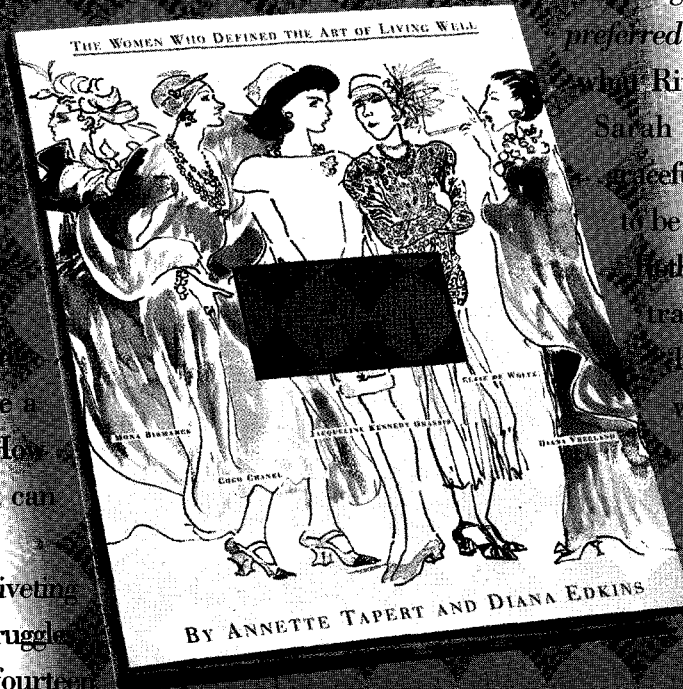
# What gives a woman style?

"I'M NOTHING TO LOOK AT," the Duchess of Windsor admitted. Rita de Acosta Lydig paid no attention to what she was wearing. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had none of the attributes of the ideal American girl, and Diana Vreeland never had money. Yet each of these women had a personal magnetism and allure so strong that she could "dominate a room from a footstool." How did they do it? And what can you learn from them?

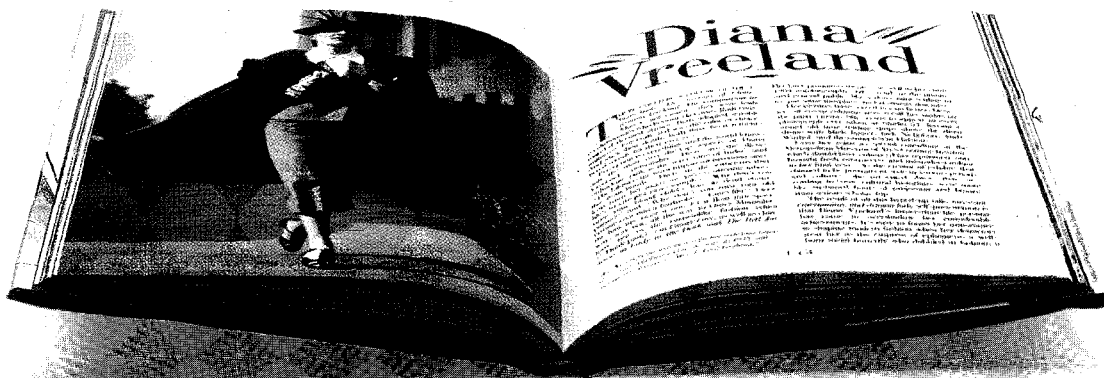
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for kids before the training; but the figure rose to between thirty-six and forty-four per cent afterward. An optimist might see progress, but many parents will see a six-in-ten chance that their own children will not be getting sufficient attention. (Galinsky said day care in Florida was better than in most of the rest of the country.)

The White House conference on the brain could touch off an emotional debate about the responsibilities of parents, and how active the government should be in encouraging parents to act responsibly. "The real policy implication," one White House aide said, "may turn out to be that we should try to make it easier for parents to stay home"—during the first few years of life—by offering a large, concentrated tax incentive.

"I hadn't thought of that," Reiner says. "That's what the conservatives are going to be for. It's very depressing."

Not just conservatives. William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, both of whom have worked on the White House staff (Kamarck still does, for the Vice-President), proposed just such a tax credit in "Mandate for Change," a policy agenda published after the first Clinton victory, by the Progressive Policy Institute, a New Democrat think tank. "I don't think this should be an either-or situation," says Galston, a former Clinton domestic-policy adviser who now teaches at the University of Maryland at College Park. "We should be

investing more in our children, period. We should have greater incentives for parents to stay home in the early years, and better child-care options for those who can't afford to do that. But don't ask me to choose between them. That's someone else's box, not mine."

It is the White House's box, and the White House hasn't yet decided how, or whether, to climb out of it. "I'd hope that every parent who learns about this research will want to go find their kids and hug them," Bruce Reed, the President's domestic-policy adviser, says. "I'd hope that this information will cause a lasting change in parental behavior."

But what about government's role? To be determined, Reed says. And how can this year's interest in early-childhood development be squared with last year's welfare-reform legislation, which now demands that poor women leave their children and find work? "We believe that kids who grow up in a household without the structure of work as a discipline and aspiration will also suffer," Reed says. "It doesn't mean that lousy child care is a good idea, but we believe that if you can bring work to a household, and a community, lives will improve."

**L**OOK, if you have a chance to land in Normandy, does that mean you have to plan the invasion all the way to Berlin?" a White House aide asked, in defense of the semi-hatched nature of

some of the President's education initiatives. Although Bruce Reed and others had been planning for a second term through much of 1996, the education package seems to have been cobbled together hastily, to produce *something* in time for the State of the Union Message.

There is a signature Clintonian quality to all this—ambitious, high-minded, and haphazard. Like the White House brain conference, much of the rest of the President's education policy—especially the call for national reading and math standards—raises more compelling questions than it seems prepared to answer. It was the President himself who insisted on the most rigorous reading and math tests. "He knew this stuff cold," an aide said. "The Department of Education was dragging its feet a little, but he knew exactly what he wanted."

The Department of Education would no doubt deny recalcitrance, but it wasn't thrilled with the last set of NAEP reading results, for the year 1994, released in April of 1995. "Dick Riley didn't even attend the press conference," one testing expert said. "I can't remember another time when the Secretary of Education didn't show up." The test results were brutal. NAEP divides students into four categories: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. The two crucial categories are in the middle: a basic reader will know, say, that the tortoise beat the hare;

a proficient reader will be able to extrapolate that "slow and steady wins the race." (An advanced reader might make the First Lady's point: that the lesson can be applied to other endeavors as well.) The 1994 NAEP results for fourth graders were: seven per cent advanced, twenty-three per cent proficient, and thirty per cent basic—which left forty per cent semi-literate at best. The figures for certain minorities were even more depressing: one per cent of blacks were advanced, seven per cent were proficient, twenty-two per cent were basic, and seventy per cent were below basic.

The 1994 NAEP results were culled from a national sample. The President has proposed that a similar test be given to *every* fourth grader in 1999, but he can't ordain it. He has to get the



*"I seem to have missed the cup."*



## BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

Returning takes too long.

In the flatlands  
the trees fill with heat,  
the stations arrive at light  
by a process of logic:  
goat willow, birchwoods,  
a cluster of dusty leaves,  
  
then brickwork  
and a street that aches for snow.  
I never sleep on trains. I'd soon be lost  
and how would I know myself  
if not for the way you listen in your sleep  
and find me,  
                    turning,  
waking,  
                    drifting off;  
  
how would I know I was there  
without your breathing,  
letting me dive so far into the dark  
and filling the gaps on my way  
with the amber of knowledge.

—JOHN BURNSIDE

individual states to agree, and that may not be easy, even though he is offering to reimburse them for the costs of the examination. "Do we have a strategy for getting the states to go along?" an aide asks. "Well, he'll be out pushing this. We think Governor Engler's support is significant—a lot of the other Republican governors look to him. We're not expecting a huge rush of other states right away, though. . . . Is there a Plan B if they don't come along? No."

And so it is entirely possible that the centerpiece of the President's education initiative will never come into being. But it is also possible—and this is clearly what Bill Clinton is hoping for—that enough states will go along, and then the million reading mentors that he has called for will swarm into elementary-school classrooms throughout America in 1998, and the NAEP results will show a dramatic improvement in 1999. If the President were to achieve his goal—every fourth grader reading at or above the basic level—that would be a significant accomplishment indeed.

He is likely to settle for less than

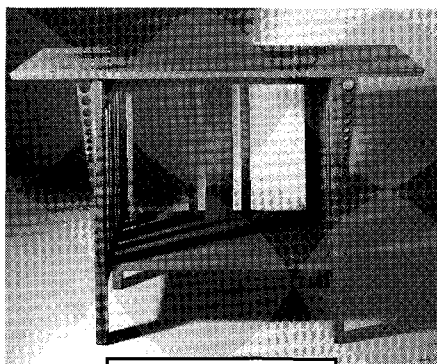
that—for a national-testing regime that demonstrates just how much work needs to be done. And, like the conference on the brain, this may intensify the existing, deeply rutted policy debates between left and right—especially when parents across the country begin receiving the NAEP results, and find their children semi-literate or worse. The left will want to spend more money on poor schools; the right will argue for a freer, more entrepreneurial system. If the President is lucky, a national consensus may emerge—as William Galston proposed on early-education issues—to try both. "You're not going to get an argument from me about trying everything, including spending more money on poor schools," Chester E. Finn, Jr., a conservative education specialist with the Hudson Institute, says. "But we've also got to try some of the things that give palpitations to the teachers' unions"—things like school vouchers, merit pay, and the elimination of tenure.

As President, Bill Clinton has avoided such harsh specificity—in part, no doubt, because the teachers' unions were among

his strongest supporters, but also because he has no direct authority over such things: a union contract, like almost every other aspect of education, is a local matter. Which is why education is an area that Presidents have traditionally left to their speechwriters (and why this President didn't devote very much time to it until he began to run for reelection). Clinton's decision to stake his second term on this usually peripheral area seems a combination of true interest—he lights up whenever he enters a school—and desperation. Most of his and the First Lady's beloved social-policy issues are off the table: welfare has been "reformed" (at least, for the moment), and health care probably won't be any time soon. Crime is down. Affirmative action is being mended, not ended. The great entitlement battles—over Medicare and Social Security—are there to be fought, but they are dry, bitter debates: a matter of taking something away from the public rather than offering anything to it (other than the distant prospect of fiscal stability). "Yes, it's difficult to really *do* something about education," an aide says. "You don't control the levers of power. But he's pursuing this because it's what he really cares about."

These are humble times for government, and Bill Clinton's education plan is a modest policy. He does not ask for vast new funds. He offers no sticks along with his few scraggly carrots—there is no requirement that states join his testing regime, lest conservatives squawk that he is "imposing" a national education scheme; there is no requirement that high-school graduates pass a test to receive college-tuition tax credits, lest liberals squawk that minorities would suffer a "disparate impact." It's also possible that all this will be swallowed by the scandals that have overwhelmed Washington. But the debate about parental responsibility which will attend the brain conference is bound to be provocative, and the outrage that may accompany the testing results in 1999 could instigate some useful reforms. And, though Bill Clinton would no doubt like to be remembered for something more dramatic, he may have to settle for this: that at a moment when the public distrusted the government's ability to provide answers, he demonstrated—in this area, at least—an ability to raise some of the important questions. ♦





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## PARIS JOURNAL

# THE CHILL

*The French turn a crisis into a romance.*

BY ADAM GOPNIK

**I**T was a very cold winter here, and it felt even colder. "It's the dampness," every shivering Parisian explained. But really it was something else. A visitor who has walked bareheaded and oblivious through twenty arctic Canadian winters found that, out for a walk in Paris with the temperature in the high thirties, he was pulling a woolen hat over his ears and huddling in doorways and stopping in cafés to drink hot wine, and then quickly heading home.

What has made it seem so cold is the French gift for social dramatization: a cold day is a cold day, and everyone conspires to give it presence. Looking cold is also a way of making it plain that you are feeling miserable, a way to dramatize the "economic horror" that has overtaken Paris. In the chill, a series of smaller social pageants have been played out—including a hostage-taking, a craze for a strange book on economics, a growing conviction that the way out of the crisis is for everyone to stop working, a campaign against immigrants that led to mass civil disobedience by intellectuals, and visits by two foreigners bringing messages of deliverance.

The hostage-taking at the Crédit Foncier de France, a "semi-public," or state-supported, mortgage lender, was the first and the most improbable of the economic dramas. The Crédit Foncier was practically bankrupt, and the government decided to fob off parts of it on anybody who wanted bits of a failing bank. Its employees then decided that the best way to persuade the government to reconsider this plan was to go to the top, and kidnap the president, a M. Jérôme Meyssonier. Not only did M. Meyssonier stay on as a hostage but he supposedly made it the only condition of his imprisonment that no photographer be allowed to take a picture of

him sleeping on a cot in his office. The employees agreed, and even decided to keep the bank open for business while the boss was being held incommunicado. Then they, too, decided to sleep in the building—presumably an act of solidarity



*The most popular idea for fixing the economy: everyone should stop working sooner.*

with the boss they had just imprisoned.

Hostage-taking of this kind has become more or less routine here, kidnapping the boss being to the French economic crisis what firing the employees is to the American one. Over the past few years, a number of French bosses, including some at Moët et Chandon, have been held hostage. There's actually a nice word for telling the *patron* to go to his room and stay there: he is merely being "sequestered"—which, as euphemisms go, seems a fair trade for the Anglo-Saxon "downsizing."

The hostage-takings, naturally, are almost entirely symbolic: if M. Meysson-



nier had really wanted to leave, he could have left. The melodrama of the "sequestration" was nonetheless mistaken by some foreign observers for the real thing. It's easy to exaggerate the scale of the French crisis; the French do it themselves. The secondary, or symbolic, point of an action is often as clear as the primary, or practical, reality, and sometimes a lot clearer. At Christmastime in 1995, many journalists were enthralled by the masses of ordinary people who were out on the streets every day in the tens of thousands, symbolically showing their solidarity with striking Métro drivers. It was easy to miss the real point, which is that what everybody was doing on the streets was walking to work.

One economic problem is especially acute here: unemployment—or *chômage*, as it's called—has hovered around twelve per cent for the last two years. Most of the other problems—the ones that create the sense of crisis—are anticipatory. They grow out of the fear that the right-wing government's tentative attempts at reform will eventually corral France into an "Anglo-Saxon" economy, where an unleashed free market will make everybody do awful jobs for no money, forever. No one is reassured by the stridently triumphal tones of American free-marketers. After a recent trip to New York, one French journalist remarked that leafing through a copy of *Forbes* or *Fortune* is like reading the operating manual of a strangely sanctimonious pirate ship.

These days, one popular solution to the economic crisis is for everyone to stop working. The movement to lower the universal retirement age to fifty-five is the closest thing to a mass economic uprising that the country has seen: without the support of even the labor unions, to say nothing of the bemused parties of left or right, it is sweeping the country. It started last November, when striking truck drivers blockaded highways and ports to secure their right to retire at fifty-five. The government, faced with a choice between calling out the Army and giving in, gave in. There was a general feeling that social justice had been done: truck drivers work long hours, away from their families, and letting them stop for good at fifty-five seemed fair.

Several weeks later, people started to realize that, after all, the truck drivers' lot wasn't that much harder than everybody else's, and the idea of universal retirement at fifty-five really took flight. In January, one of the public-transportation unions

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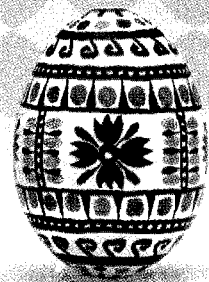
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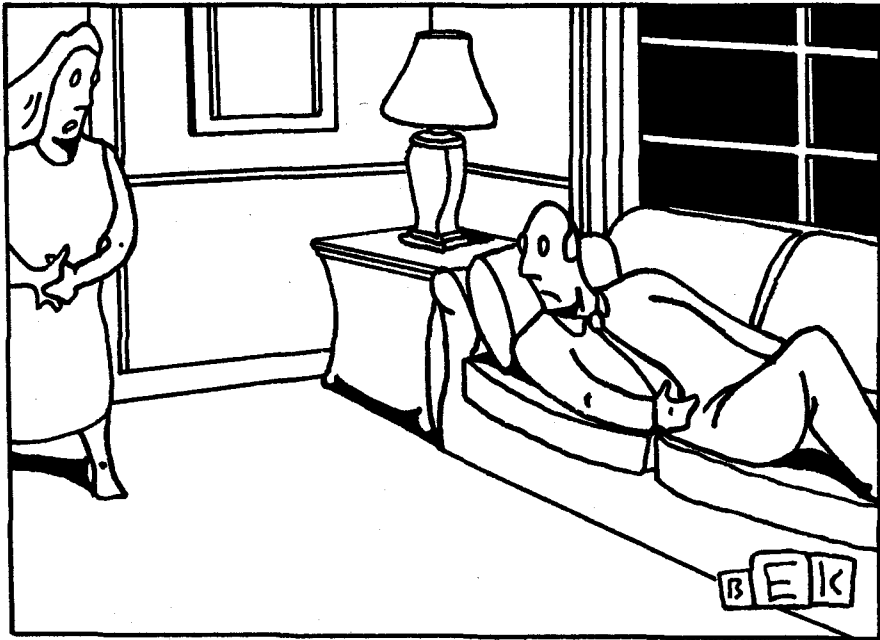


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decided to demand universal retirement at fifty-five, and, despite the opposition of the respectable left, by mid-February a poll revealed that almost seventy per cent of the population was in favor of stopping work at fifty-five.

The *folie* for fifty-five can be seen as a nice populist rebound on an idea first put forward by employers. For years, businesses had been able to draw on a public fund (the Fonds National pour l'Emploi) in order to encourage workers to take early retirement. At the same time, the idea of reducing the length of the work week has been debated: many people, for instance, had proposed moving to a four-day week, so that a few young workers might be shoehorned in on Fridays. In the minds of many working people, though, the debate about a shorter work week got mixed up with the truck drivers' retirement coup, and the two together produced a sweeping, simple, plausible-sounding solution to the *crise*: since the unemployed would benefit if everyone worked a little bit less, wouldn't they benefit even more if everyone stopped working a lot sooner?

THE national craze for early retirement may be an employees' twist on an employers' gimmick, but its roots are cultural. Retirement isn't scary here. In America, one unmentioned aspect of the Social Security debate is the feeling people have that to stop working is, in a sense,

to stop living. It is the vestibule of death. In France, there is no equivalent anxiety—and there are no great Florida-style gulags for the elderly. One of the striking things about Paris is that it is filled with old people who actually look old: bent, fitted out with canes, but dining and lunching and taking the air and walking their small, indifferent dogs along with everybody else. The humiliations visited on old people in America—dressed up like six-year-olds, in shorts and T-shirts and sneakers, imploding with rage—aren't common here. The romance of retirement is strong. The right-wing daily *Figaro*, for instance, though editorially opposed to the move for very early retirement, ran a series of pieces about the "young retired"—people still in their forties or fifties who have managed to stop working. The series described people who at last have time to "reflect"; it was written in exactly the same admiring spirit that an American daily might use for a series about old people who are as busy as all getout.

For Parisians, the pleasure of quitting isn't far to seek. Many of them come from the country—or, at least, feel attached to a particular village—so the idea of *returning* has a certain appeal. They are not being sent to Florida; they are just going home. People who remain here in town find that life becomes interesting when they stop working. Everyone who attends French public lectures knows that the

most visible, and most audible, element in the crowd is the phalanx of the retired. Sometimes they present a bit of a problem, since they tend to be contentious, and when the subject comes within their purview—if it's the Third Republic, say, or the Second World War—they feel free to speak up and correct the lecturer.

NOT long ago, somebody referred to the debate on Social Security in America as being distorted by "black helicopter" thinking. In France, there is something that might be called "white helicopter" thinking. The American populist belief is that there is a secret multinational agency ready to swoop down from the skies and make everybody work for the government; the French populist belief is that there is a secret government agency that may yet swoop down from the skies and give everybody a pension.

"L'Horreur Économique," the extreme manifesto of white-helicopter thought, is the most successful book of the last several publishing seasons. A treatise by the novelist and essayist Viviane Forrester, it has sold a couple of hundred thousand copies in six months, and in November it won the Prix Médicis, which is something like a French Pulitzer Prize. Forrester is a minor bellettrist whose earlier work included popular studies of Virginia Woolf and van Gogh. Not surprisingly, in "L'Horreur Économique" she has produced a work of political economy with all the economics, and most of the politics, left out. Unburdened by pie charts, statistics, or much else in the way of argument or evidence, the book is written in a tone of steady, murmuring apocalyptic dissent, with an occasional perky nod to a familiar neo-liberal argument. The total effect is of a collaboration between Robert Reich and Rimbaud. Barely into the first chapter, the author flatly announces that the logic of globalization will lead to an Auschwitz of the unemployed: "From exploitation to exclusion, from exclusion to elimination," she writes. "Is it such an unlikely scenario?"

The reader eventually comes to the realization that Forrester is not arguing against the free market, or even against globalization, but against the original sin of commerce—against buying and selling and hiring and firing and getting and spending. Her book is a pure expression of the old French romance of a radical alternative, with the ancient Catholic prej-



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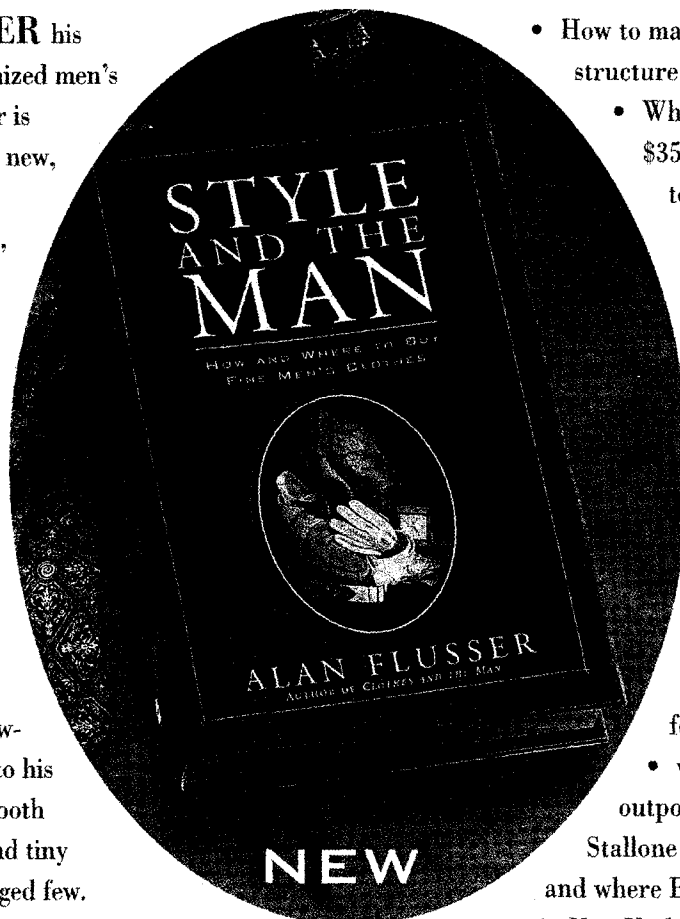
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udices against usury, simony, and the rest translated into a curious kind of dinner-party nihilism. Of course, the trouble with reviving the romance of the radical alternative is that the only radical alternative remaining is the extreme right-winger Jean-Marie Le Pen, who isn't romantic at all.

Laurent Joffrin, the editor of the left-wing daily *Libération*, likes to say that Forrester's book is a "symptom." "The fears are irrational, psychological, but they are real," he says. He himself is a kind of neo-Keynesian, and, like many other sensible people here, he thinks that, for all the hysteria, the economic *crise* is not really very deep, and could be soothed by a little deficit spending. But the Keynesian medicine is forbidden by the rules of the Maastricht Treaty, which is to lead to European economic union, and which, for the sake of German confidence, prohibits new deficit spending.

In any case, there's something emotionally unsatisfying about the Keynesian message. It is like going to the doctor in the certainty that you're dying of tuberculosis, only to be told that your trouble is that your shoes are too tight. In America, and even more so in England, the triumphant free market has a rhetoric, and even a kind of poetry, of its own, visible in *The Economist* and *The Spectator* and the *Telegraph*: witty, trumpet-sharp, exuberant, hard-hearted. In France, there is a knack of small shopkeeping and a high rhetoric of the state, but there will never be a high rhetoric of shopkeeping.

BY the end of February, a new social movement was sweeping the papers and the streets. This one came from the left, in reaction to a new bill that attempted to appease Le Pen supporters by jumping up and down on illegal immigrants. The most obnoxious aspect of the Debré bill—named after the Interior Minister—was a requirement that people who had foreign guests in their homes inform the police when the foreigners left. This provision was so reminiscent of the Vichy laws, which made denouncing Jews a social obligation, that the entire French intellectual class launched a series of petitions against it. Famous artists and directors announced (theatrically, and as a dare-you-to-do-something-about-it principle, rather than as actual fact) that

they were lodging illegal immigrants. The petitions flooded the newspapers, and were signed by groups: directors, actors, philosophers, and even dentists. A massive demonstration was held, drawing as few as thirty thousand people (the government counting the marchers) or as many as a hundred thousand (the marchers counting themselves).

The provision was immediately withdrawn, but everyone agreed it was depressing that the government had been swayed by Le Pen's absurd notion that France's economic problems have to do with the presence of immigrants, legal or illegal. Many people, including numerous petition signers, also thought there was a depressing element of coercive self-congratulation about the marchers. The protest reached its climax when protesters, got up as deportees, arrived at the Gare de l'Est to reenact the deportations of the forties. This struck even many sympathetic watchers as being in *mauvais goût*.

ON a recent Saturday, at the first children's concert of the season at the beautiful new Cité de la Musique, the union of part-time artists, who had been threatening to strike over *their* pension predicament, decided instead to educate the audience. Before a Rameau pastorelle began, a representative of the union harangued the five-year-olds for fifteen minutes on the role of itinerant workers in the arts, and about the modalities of their contributions to the national pension fund, and how the government was imperilling their retirement. The five-year-olds listened respectfully, and then gave him a big hand.

In the midst of the economic gloom, Bill Gates came to France. Not since Wilbur Wright, back in 1908, has an American arrived in France quite so imbued with the mystique of American inventiveness, industry, and technological hocus-pocus. Bill Gates came here with a masterpiece, the Leonardo Codex, and it has gone on display in the Musée du Luxembourg, but his visit seems unlikely to produce a masterpiece, as Wilbur Wright's did. Wright became the subject of one of the great portraits by the boy genius Jacques-Henri Lartigue, the Mozart of photography, which summed up the early-twentieth-century French view of American technological wizardry: grave, dignified, pure. Bill Gates doesn't



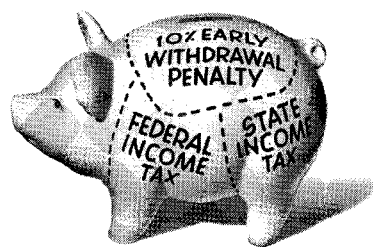


have the bone structure, and anyway the French cult of Gates is strangely indeterminate. He is described, variously, as the father of the Internet and the creator of popular computing—as anything except what he is, which is the head of a gigantic corporation. He is a symbol divorced from his invention, an aviator without an airplane.

Nonetheless, he is presumed to know something. "What France needs is its own Bill Gates," the governor of the Bank of France announced. Gates's message to the French, which is essentially that buying Windows will lead to mass happiness, was symbolically linked with that of another celebrated recent visitor, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Habermas is the last of Europe's "master thinkers," and he gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France. His books and lectures have been the subject of reports in *Le Monde* and *L'Express* and on the television news. It seems that Habermas has replaced his old theory of the state, which was that there is no natural basis for it outside of a bunch of human conventions, with a new theory, which is that the natural basis for the state is the human habit of arguing about whether or not it has one. The argument is somewhat opaque, but it has produced a nice catchphrase: "social communication." That, rather than the social contract, is to be the basis of the new society, and a hope now faintly glimmers that between Habermas and Gates—between the German philosopher who tells you that you need only connect and the American businessman who will sell you the software to let you do it—a new, comprehensive social theory is around the corner.

Some people just get fed up, waiting. After five days in mostly happy captivity at Crédit Foncier, Jérôme Meyssonier decided that he'd had enough. "*Ça suffit*," the president announced to his employees, and that afternoon he went home. Curiously, he had become, in the interim, a kind of hero to the very people who were keeping him locked up. "Meyssonier is with us!" the employees of the Crédit Foncier cried as their boss emerged into the light. (Later in the week, they added to that slogan an even better one: "The semi-public will never surrender!") On television, Meyssonier was seen smiling weakly. He looked worn out, and about ready to quit, but then perhaps this should not be a surprise. M. Meyssonier is fifty-five. ♦

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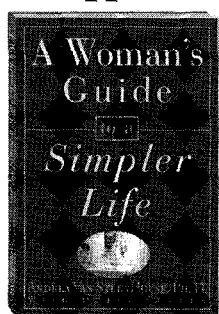
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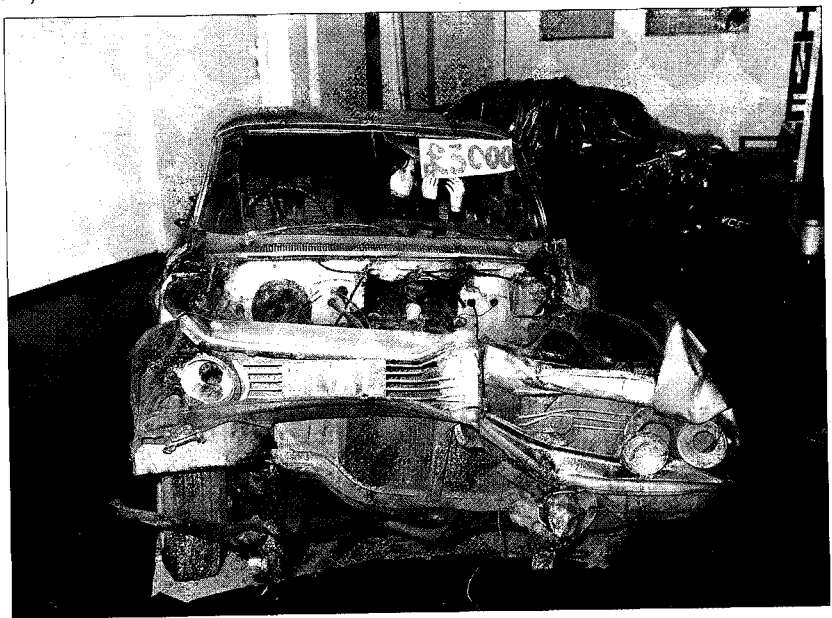
# THE ROAD TO "CRASH"

*It was a shocking novel when it was published twenty-four years ago. Now it's the most controversial film of the year. Why did J. G. Ballard write it?*

BY TOM SHONE

On a fine summer's day in the early seventies, the English writer J. G. Ballard stepped out into the back garden of his house in a London suburb, took in the view, and dropped some LSD. He never repeated the experience, and said later that it was a "clas-

juries and roll-over, the ecstasies of head-on collisions." So speaks the narrator, who, in the course of the book, and with the help of some like-minded characters, works this stark sex-death equation through all its possible permutations. He has sex in his car. He crashes his car. He



*In 1970, Ballard towed three crashed cars into an art gallery and arranged for a topless girl to interview visitors. It was the start of "Crash."*

sic bad trip." The amazing thing is that LSD sent him on any kind of trip at all. For Ballard was the kind of guy who wrote *this* for a living: "I think of the absurd crashes of neurasthenic housewives returning from their VD clinics . . . of sadistic charge nurses decapitated in inverted crashes on complex interchanges; of supermarket manageresses burning to death in the collapsed frames of their midget cars before the stoical eyes of middle-aged firemen." He was the kind of guy who, having written that, would go back and change "supermarket manageresses" to "lesbian supermarket manageresses," just for fun.

That passage is taken from Ballard's bad-trip classic "Crash," which explores the erotic significance of the automobile accident—"the meaning of whiplash in-

has sex in the spot where he crashed his car. He has sex in his crashed car with his girlfriend. Then with the woman he crashed into. And every idle moment he fills with fond meditation on the "complex geometries" of the dented fender, the "gymnastic ballet" of multiple pileups, windshield ejections, and other "optimum auto-deaths."

Ballard's book rammed into public consciousness in 1973, before backing off into cult status. Now it has been made into a movie by David Cronenberg, although the reception of Cronenberg's "Crash" has had a more fitful stop-start rhythm. The movie was shown in Cannes last year to a mixed chorus of boos and applause; it won a Special Jury Prize, despite the reported loathing of Francis Ford Coppola, the jury president. After it was

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screened again, at the London Film Festival, in November, the British Secretary of State for National Heritage, Virginia Bottomley, called for it to be banned; the film still awaits certification in Britain. And it reaches American cinemas next week only after a lengthy wrangle between Ted Turner, who owns the film's distributor, and Ted Turner, who thought the film might encourage people to have sex in their cars while driving at high speed.

All of which finds Ballard, at age sixty-six, in buoyant high spirits. He is no stranger to controversy; on the contrary, he is controversy's friend and longtime companion. In Britain, a publication of his entitled "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" was one of the prime exhibits in a 1968 obscenity trial; Ballard was due to take the stand until the defense attorney realized that he would make a better case for the prosecution. He has always prized Conrad's dictum "To the destructive element submit yourself," so it makes perfect sense that his first question to me, upon sitting down to Sunday lunch at London's Halcyon Hotel, would be a gleeful "Have you been sent to attack me?"

He seems a little crestfallen when I answer that I'm mostly trying to put him in context for American readers. "And what context is that?" he asks. I admit that I can't actually see much in the way of context. "Good!" he says. "Keep it that way!" Lunch with Ballard is a distinctly nerve-racking affair. He is a model of good-humored geniality, but his volume level when he is broaching such topics as the possible eroticism of car-crash wounds takes no heed whatsoever of surrounding diners. Next to us, a family of four make increasingly unenthusiastic progress through their Sunday roast; instead, they're huddling over it in whispered conference: Who on earth is this man? The answer is simple: like it or not, they've been seated beside Britain's only living prose surrealist.

Earning that status is quite an achievement, given the natural resistance to surrealism on the part of both Britain and prose, and has required equal amounts of perversity and guts. In a 1982 essay, "What I Believe," Ballard laid out his credo: "I believe in the beauty of the car crash, in the peace of the submerged forest, in the excitements of the deserted holiday beach, in the elegance of automo-

bile graveyards, in the mystery of multi-storey car parks, in the poetry of abandoned hotels." Public affection had a hard time blooming in Ballard's blanched, lunar landscapes; but in 1984 Ballard published an autobiographical novel, "Empire of the Sun"—detailing his childhood internment by the Japanese in wartime China—which won him a new and broader readership. Then came the enormously successful movie version of the book, which makes Ballard the only author ever to have been adapted for the screen by both Spielberg and Cronenberg. It's a huge leap—from film's greatest childhood dreamer to its most pitiless chronicler of adult nightmares—and among the greatest compliments the cinema has paid one man's imagination. But then Ballard has always taken such extremes in stride, in both his life and his work, and he demands that we do the same, if only to keep up.

JAMES GRAHAM BALLARD was born in 1930, in Shanghai, the only son of a wealthy businessman. His family was part of a community of expatriate Britons living in one of the city's suburbs—a small corner of ersatz England, filled with Tudor-style mansions that could have been airlifted over from Surrey or Dorset. After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, when Ballard was eleven, he and his family were sent to a civilian prison camp at Lunghua, about ten miles south of Shanghai, where they remained for three and a half years. Ballard says that he thoroughly enjoyed the camp: free of his parents' control, he kept himself hyperactively busy—running errands, playing bridge. Years later, for a column called "The Worst of Times," which appeared in the *Independent*, Ballard selected as his own worst experience not his imprisonment at Lunghua but his family's return, in 1946, to England—a place Ballard had until then only read about in books, and had imagined to be a "sunlit, semi-rural land with beautiful rolling meadows and village greens and ivy-clad rectories." Instead, he later wrote, he found "a London that looked like Bucharest with a hangover" and a gray-faced race of people who "talked as if they had won the war, but behaved as if they had lost it."

He went to Cambridge, trained to become a doctor, then joined the R.A.F., and that shifting of perspective on hu-

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manity—from a worm's-eye view to a bird's-eye view—runs right through his fiction: in his books, either you're a distant speck in an engulfing landscape or you're making a big mess on somebody's windshield. "Crash" has always had a big cult following in France and Italy—countries, it will be noted, that have a markedly more relaxed attitude toward both experimentation in the arts and safety on the roads than Britain's—but when the odd Citroën-load of French "Crash" freaks made the pilgrimage to Ballard's house in the seventies they were disappointed to find not the crazed arts terrorist they'd expected but a courteous Englishman in striped shirt, jacket, and sandals, with three kids and a golden retriever—his only concession to abnormality being a pet rat. "Lovely creature," Ballard recalls. "Never bit anyone."

Ballard's house is to be found in Shepperton, a far-flung and supernally quiet suburb of London. Outside in his driveway is a battered Ford Granada. (Yes, he's had sex in a car, many times, but has crashed only once; he didn't like it nearly as much.) He lives alone now; his wife died suddenly, in 1964, of pneumonia. His children, whom he reared single-handed, have grown up and moved away. He has a longtime girlfriend, Claire, to whom he periodically proposes, and who gave him, as a sixtieth-birthday present, the unicycle that sits in the hall.

Ballard tells me that he can ride it, and it seems as good a vehicle as any for negotiating the cramped confines of his house. A prodigiously large potted palm dominates most of the front room; a pile of shoes cower in the corner, planning their getaway; an exercise bike holds out no such hope. In the back room, where Ballard works—in longhand, in spiral-bound notebooks—a large orange sofa is busy collapsing in on itself. His copy of the medical textbook "Crash Injuries" now lives upstairs ("Oh, that—that's just a joke"), but among the books that remain below are a copy of the Warren Commission report (shelved with fiction) and monographs of Gaudi, Dali, and the Belgian surrealist Paul Delvaux, one of whose paintings, destroyed in the blitz, Ballard has had reconstructed using a little of the money he earned from "Empire of the Sun." It is far too large to be

hung on the wall—it's almost as big as the wall—and so simply leans against it, providing anyone willing to risk the sofa with a fine view of some naked women standing in a garden. Surrealism may never have taken off in Britain, but it has taken quiet, firm root in the house of J. G. Ballard.

"Drink?" he asks, a single glass in his hand. A decade or so ago, he would have joined you. Or, rather, you would have joined *him*: he used to start on the whiskey at 9 A.M. and continue through the day. He's got it back to nightfall now, but



his body language, like that of many reformed heavy drinkers, still carries within it a distant chemical memory of drunkenness. When he is ascending the conversational foothills toward

one of his favorite theories—"the Normalizing of the Psychopathic," say, or "the Death of Affect" (he seems to speak in capitals a lot)—his eyes widen a little madly and his laconic drawl rises to an excited declamatory pitch, his white hair shaking loose. The over-all effect is of the Ancient Mariner if he'd been an ex-R.A.F., whiskey-and-soda kind of chap.

His first novels, published in the early sixties, were science fiction, but of a highly selective sort. Ballard passed on the genre's rockets and robots but took up the offer of earth-shattering cataclysm, and in "The Drowned World," "The Wind from Nowhere," "The Drought," and "The Crystal World" he successively flooded, sandblasted, dry-roasted, and petrified the globe. The British have always had a talent for disaster stories—possibly a flamboyant offshoot of their talent for self-deprecation—but one peculiarity of Ballard's disaster stories is that they seem to embrace apocalypse with open arms. Take this passage from "The Crystal World," the title of which speaks for itself:

What most surprised me . . . was the extent to which I was prepared for the transformation of the forest—the crystalline trees hanging like icons in those luminous caverns, the jeweled casements of the leaves overhead, fused into a lattice of prisms, through which the sun shone in a thousand rainbows, the birds and crocodiles frozen into grotesque postures like heraldic beasts carved from jade and quartz.

Or, for that matter, take any of Ballard's heroes, who survive the worst only by heading straight into it. At the end of

"The Drowned World," the hero journeys not north, to safety and dry land, but south, into the terminal heat of a vast swamp. "The original American publisher suggested that I change the ending," Ballard recalls, laughing, "as if somehow I'd mislaid my compass." He had, of course: Ballard's bearings were internally, not externally, calibrated. "It is *inner* space, not outer, that needs to be explored," he wrote in 1962, in *New Worlds*, the magazine that helped launch Britain's new wave of science fiction. "People have accused me of being pessimistic as a writer," he says now. "But actually all these early novels of mine—and all my fiction, right to the present—they're all stories of psychological fulfillment. My heroes all find themselves in a disintegrating world, and they construct a personal mythology which will give meaning to their lives and then they embark on a journey in which they try to fulfill themselves in terms of this mythology."

Ballard's own mythology, meanwhile, was ready for a makeover. The late sixties found his fiction holed up in a snaking concourse of spaghetti junctions and concrete high-rises, while his imagination went walkabout in hyperreality. In his 1970 novel, "The Atrocity Exhibition"—whose chapters include "You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe," "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race," and "Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A."—Ballard seemed intent on taking the entire twentieth century personally. "We live inside an enormous novel," he has written. "The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality." His best work of this period started life as just that: a big hunk of reality—or, rather, three big hunks of reality. In 1970, Ballard towed three crashed cars into an art gallery, London's Arts Laboratory; arranged for a topless girl to interview visitors on closed-circuit TV; and sat back to soak up the response—a mixture of nervous laughter and casual vandalism. "That was my green light to write 'Crash,'" he says. Further spur, if any were needed, came in the form of one publisher's note on the book. "This author is beyond psychiatric help. Do not publish," it read. "Which," Ballard says, "I regarded as complete artistic success."

To call "Crash" a shocking book gets you only halfway there, for shock is its subject as well as its object—both its



means and its end. It is also a novel *in* shock, its form buckling under the weight of the author's exhaustively reiterated obsession. It has all the problems with suspense that you'd expect from a book about a bunch of characters with sublimated death wishes, and its sentences frequently collapse in a pileup of abstractions ("For him these wounds were the keys to a new sexuality born from a perverse technology"), but its lack of momentum is, with typically jackknifing logic, the point. It's the world's first slow-motion novel, aspiring to the stasis of a Muybridge photograph—which is one of the reasons that it is a book better contemplated than read. Reading the thing may be like boring through concrete, but from a safe distance its central conceit acquires a wicked Swiftian glint: the nicest thing you can do to the human body and one of the nastiest, swapped.

Ballard's fiction, post-"Crash," gives the impression of an imagination going easy on itself. But by the time of the 1979 novel "The Unlimited Dream Company," in which he turned Shepperton into a green and luxuriant sexual utopia,

his imaginings had acquired a mellow, spongiform texture, his defamiliarizing tricks having now been worn smooth with familiarity: too many dreams, not enough limits. Then, just as his books looked as if they were slipping into the inky fingers of the diehard cultists, Ballard went and did something truly shocking: he told us a little about himself.

In a notably odd career, "Empire of the Sun" proved the crowning oddity, if only because that career now appeared to have run in reverse. Indeed. London's literary world acted as if a new writer had been born in its midst, and greeted the book with a mixture of riotous acclaim and outright puzzlement: Why had he held on to this for so long? It was almost as if William Burroughs, in his sixth decade, had suddenly turned around and knocked out "The Naked and the Dead." Ballard's book is now widely considered the best British novel about the Second World War. There are few contenders, partly because the war never reached Britain in any dramatically satisfying way, thus opening up a gap—which writers have struggled to close—between civilian

and frontline experiences. In Shanghai, Ballard saw them thrown into a dizzy, disorientating embrace.

The most haunting images in the book are to be found in the two periods of interregnum, before and after the boy's imprisonment at Lunghua, during which Shanghai couldn't quite seem to decide whether it was at war or at peace—a drained swimming pool, its floor littered with the detritus of summer parties past; a sports stadium filled with cars and illuminated by the distant light of the Nagasaki bomb. Ballard writes, "It was not that war changed everything—in fact, Jim thrived on change—but that it left things the same in odd and unsettling ways." Reading the book, you realized that the surrealism of his earlier work had been less an artistic strategy than a simple survival plan, a way of mapping the sights he had seen: chapters are headed "The Abandoned Aerodrome," "The Stranded Freighter," "A Landscape of Airfields," "The Refrigerator in the Sky." You can easily imagine Steven Spielberg—who once envisaged alien visitation in terms of a renegade vacuum cleaner—buying the



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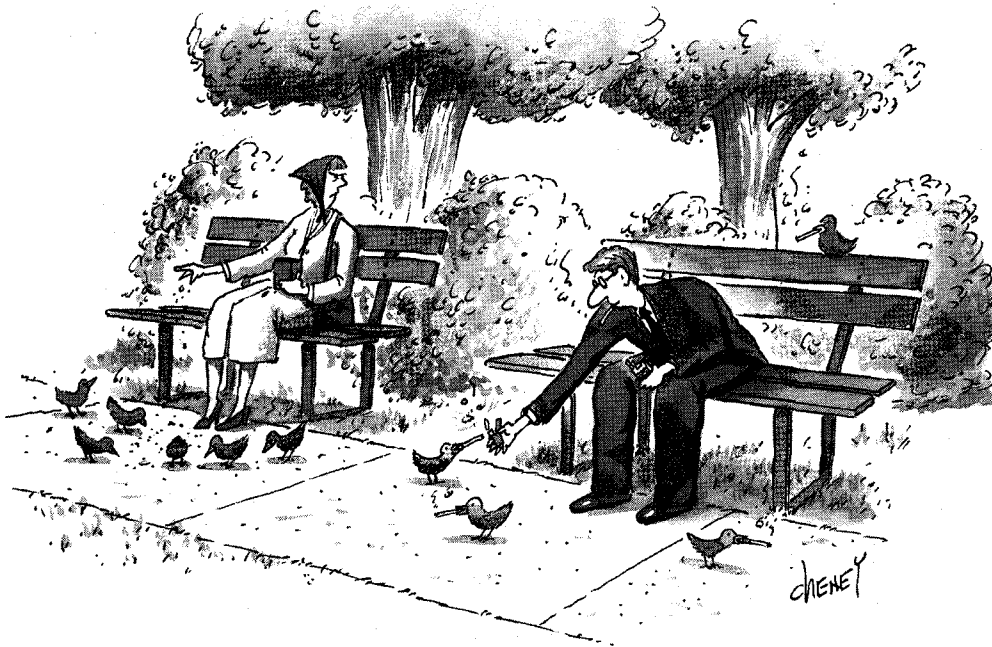
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rights to the book on the strength of that last chapter heading alone.

He was not, as he is portrayed in both book and film, separated from his parents, but he was pretty much a "free spirit" at Lunghua, he says, running wild "as teenage boys do in any large slum." His parents had none of the normal systems of leverage over him—treats to give or to withhold—and Ballard was anxious, one guesses, to avoid the fact of their powerlessness. "Watching adults under sustained stress is a great education for children, even more so when the adults are one's own parents," he says. Instead, he idolized both those who best coped with that stress (the Americans in the camp) and those who inflicted it (his Japanese captors). He puts this down, in part, to a young boy's natural hankering for hero worship. "The Japanese were the heroes of the hour, at least for the first few years of the war," he says. "There was an element of Stockholm syndrome, too. You begin to identify with and collaborate with the people who are holding you hostage. The whole war was holding me and the others hostage. One tends to develop a rather strange psychology in order to cope with this."

This strangeness was a little lost on Spielberg: in Ballard's identification with the Japanese he saw a proffered flower of international friendship; in his obsession with airplanes he saw a fairly routine symbol of flight and transcendence—a chance for another of the filmmaker's trademark shots of a boy's rapturously upturned face.

In the book, however, the young Ballard's gaze has the beady and benumbed fixity of someone staring down death ("Everyone in Lunghua was dead. It was absurd that they had failed to grasp this," he writes), and his obsession with airplanes seems bound up in this, too: he survived by fetishizing the very technologies that might one day kill him.

"One does tend to fetishize them," Ballard explains, "because that empowers you in turn, gives you some sort of sense of control. You become obsessed, as I did, with the shape of fuselages on Mustang fighters and B-29 bombers. It gave me the illusion of some sort of control over these instruments of my own private destiny. Even though they were bombing the hell out of the airfield next to the camp. One bomb misdirected would have put an end to my existence." And so, in the words of one of Ballard's favorite films, he learned to stop worrying and love the bomb.

Hence the ambivalence his science fiction displays toward apocalypse: he wasn't lamenting the future; he was memorializing his past. "The fact is, if you like, that the boy in 'Empire of the Sun' grew up in comparatively few years," he says, "and he began to write—I think, looking back—fiction that was trying to make sense of what he'd seen as a boy." By the age of fourteen, Ballard had witnessed most of the ways we have devised to bring lives to an end: he'd seen people beaten, beheaded, bombed, shot, strangled. "Every day, my eyes were

opened to a reality which I hadn't previously glimpsed, and that I still think most people in, say, this country, or in the comfortable West, haven't glimpsed."

This certainly explains the messianic tone of his work—his urgent desire to open his readers' eyes as wide as his were opened—but Ballard is wary of having his work kidnapped by his early life. "I think it's a mistake to think that everything we produce in our adult lives, whether we're painters or film directors or journalists or novelists, is radically formed by the experience of childhood," he says. "You know, I was happily married, I had three children that I've been very closely involved with as a single parent. I've had long relationships with other women that have been very happy and fulfilling. These have been just as important to me." The only gap in this picture is, of course, the one left by his wife when she died, in 1964. They had been on holiday in Spain; she came down with pneumonia; and within days she was dead.

"Hindsight never gives you twenty-twenty vision," he says of his wife's death, continuing with a thought that winds a long way before finally reaching "Crash." "She was so young—thirty-four—that I felt a terrible crime had been committed. By nature, against her. And it reminded me of all those terrible crimes that I'd seen during the war in the Far East, and it reminded me in a peculiar way of the Kennedy assassination, which had taken place the previous year and had been televised endlessly, and of the whole culture of sensational violence that had grown up in the nineteen-sixties. What I was trying to do was make sense—I think, I think—to some extent, of this meaningless death. If I could give it some meaning, make sense of Kennedy's death—all these other deaths—I could possibly find a rationale for my wife's death."

His hesitations are telling. "Crash" is clearly the work of a man who urgently wants to illuminate the darkest corners of his imagination, as a young boy might illuminate the darkest corners of his bedroom with a flashlight—so that nothing more can be imagined lurking there. But it makes for a strange act of mourning. There's a princess-and-the-pea quality to the relationship between Ballard's work and his life: the one registering



the other's presence with pinpoint accuracy—Shanghai's paddy fields resurfacing in the images of a flooded London in "The Drowned World," for instance—but through several thick layers of displacement, a lag of years, even decades. "Crash" materialized, after all, during what Ballard calls the "happiest years of my life": the years he spent bringing up his children.

"Again, with the benefit of hindsight, I think I was reliving my own childhood," he says. "Or not reliving my childhood but having a childhood for the first time." When his children left home, the circle was complete: Ballard could return to his own personal year zero and write "Empire of the Sun." At the time of its publication, Martin Amis asked him if the book signalled the end of his "hard-edge" phase. "It probably signals the end of *everything*," Ballard replied. It didn't, of course. He has gone on writing, but he has had to deal with the considerable problem, faced by few prophets, of seeing many of his prophecies come true. When Ballard writes about environmental cataclysm now, he joins a large chorus: one doesn't need the car to forge a link between sex and death anymore; and the media landscape that so exercised his imagination in the sixties has proved both as sensational and perhaps not quite so threatening as he once thought.

He has, though, found routes of ingress, like a plant pushing up through paving stones. "The Kindness of Women" (1991), a sequel to "Empire of the Sun," sees Ballard safely through the sixties (he writes about that decade as if it were the Third World War he'd been looking for), his wife's death, and the departure of his children—bringing his story up to the late eighties. You finish it with the satisfying thought that the imagination, far from being a fragile thing, is in fact a tough mental muscle, a stubborn reflex—a survival mechanism. "That's true in my case," Ballard says when I put it to him. "I think that as a boy I had a very active imagination, and it helped keep me going. It wasn't simply a matter of physical endurance." His voice rises: he has spotted a chance for one last act of provocation. "And it's helped keep me going during another period of privation—postwar life in England, to this very day. The hazards! Fifty years ago, I had to cope with General Tojo. Now I have to cope with Virginia Bottomley. Will I survive?" ♦

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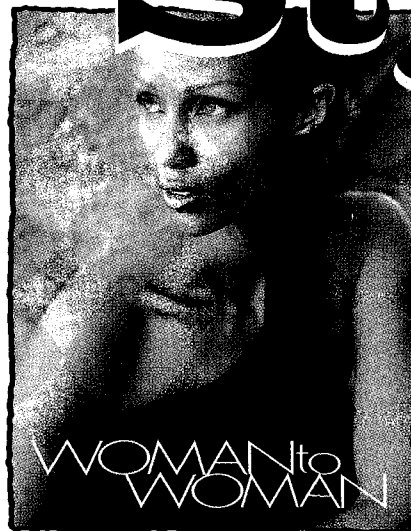
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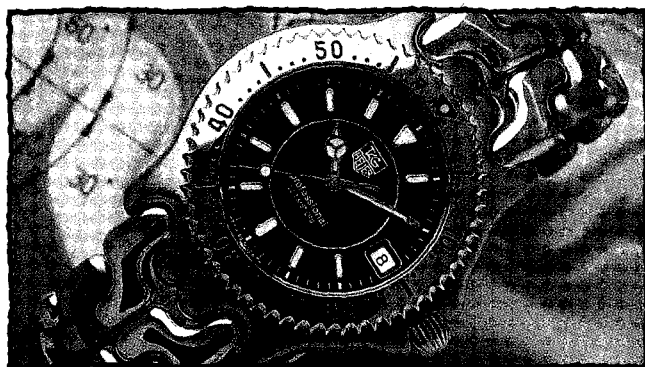
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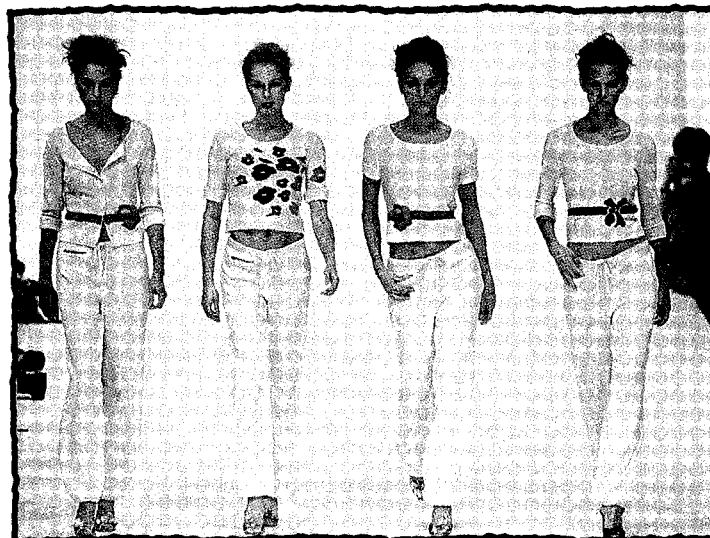


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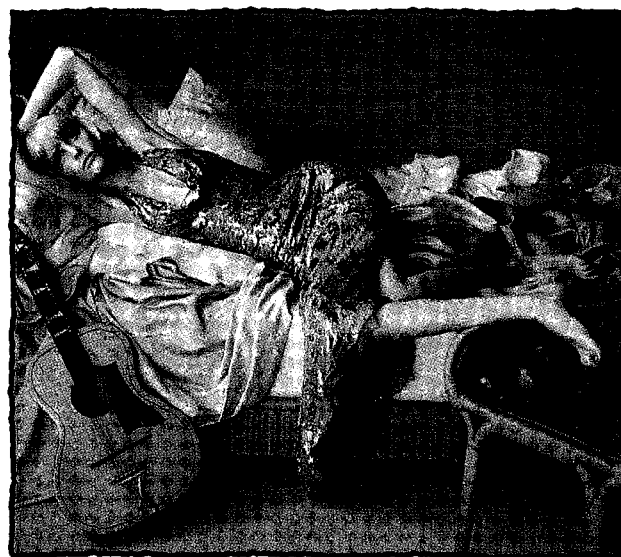


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## ANNALS OF STYLE

# THE COOLHUNT

*Who decides what's cool? Certain kids in certain places—and only the coolhunters know who they are.*

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

**B**AYSIE WIGHTMAN met DeeDee Gordon, appropriately enough, on a coolhunt. It was 1992. Baysie was a big shot for Converse, and DeeDee, who was barely twenty-one, was running a very cool boutique called Placid Planet, on Newbury Street in Boston. Baysie came in with a camera crew—one she often used when she was coolhunting—and said, “I’ve been watching your store, I’ve seen you, I’ve heard you know what’s up,” because it was Baysie’s job at Converse to find people who knew what was up and she thought DeeDee was one of those people. DeeDee says that she responded with reserve—that “I was like, ‘Whatever’”—but Baysie said that if DeeDee ever wanted to come and work at Converse she should just call, and nine months later DeeDee called. This was about the time the cool kids had decided they didn’t want the hundred-and-twenty-five-dollar basketball sneaker with seventeen different kinds of high-technology materials and colors and air-cushioned heels anymore. They wanted simplicity and authenticity, and Baysie picked up on that. She brought back the Converse One Star, which was a vulcanized, suède, low-top classic old-school sneaker from the nineteen-seventies, and, sure enough, the One Star quickly became the signature shoe of the retro era. Remember what Kurt Cobain was wearing in the famous picture of him lying dead on the ground after committing suicide? Black Converse One Stars. DeeDee’s big score was calling the sandal craze. She had been out in Los Angeles and had kept seeing the white teen-age girls dressing up like *cholos*, Mexican gangsters, in tight white tank tops known as “wife beaters,” with a bra strap hanging out, and long shorts and tube socks and shower sandals. DeeDee recalls, “I’m like, I’m telling you, Baysie, this is going to hit.

There are just too many people wearing it. We have to make a shower sandal.” So Baysie, DeeDee, and a designer came up with the idea of making a retro sneaker-sandal, cutting the back off the One Star and putting a thick outsole on it. It was *huge*, and, amazingly, it’s still huge.

Today, Baysie works for Reebok as general-merchandise manager—part of the team trying to return Reebok to the position it enjoyed in the mid-nineteen-eighties as the country’s hottest sneaker company. DeeDee works for an advertising agency in Del Mar called Lambesis, where she puts out a quarterly tip sheet called the *L Report* on what the cool kids in major American cities are thinking and doing and buying. Baysie and DeeDee are best friends. They talk on the phone all the time. They get together whenever Baysie is in L.A. (DeeDee: “It’s, like, how many times can you drive past O. J. Simpson’s house?”), and between them they can talk for hours about the art of the coolhunt. They’re the Lewis and Clark of cool.

What they have is what everybody seems to want these days, which is a window on the world of the street. Once, when fashion trends were set by the big couture houses—when cool was trickle-down—that wasn’t important. But sometime in the past few decades things got turned over, and fashion became trickle-up. It’s now about chase and flight—designers and retailers and the mass consumer giving chase to the elusive prey of street cool—and the rise of coolhunting as a profession shows how serious the chase has become. The sneakers of Nike and Reebok used to come out yearly. Now a new style comes out every season. Apparel designers used to have an eighteen-month lead time between concept and sale. Now they’re reducing that to a year, or even six months, in order to react

faster to new ideas from the street. The paradox, of course, is that the better coolhunters become at bringing the mainstream close to the cutting edge, the more elusive the cutting edge becomes. This is the first rule of the cool: The quicker the chase, the quicker the flight. The act of discovering what’s cool is what causes cool to move on, which explains the triumphant circularity of coolhunting: because we have coolhunters like DeeDee and Baysie, cool changes more quickly, and because cool changes more quickly, we need coolhunters like DeeDee and Baysie.

DeeDee is tall and glamorous, with short hair she has dyed so often that she claims to have forgotten her real color. She drives a yellow 1977 Trans Am with a burgundy stripe down the center and a 1973 Mercedes 450 SL, and lives in a spare, Japanese-style cabin in Laurel Canyon. She uses words like “rad” and “totally,” and offers non-stop, deadpan pronouncements on pop culture, as in “It’s all about Pee-wee Herman.” She sounds at first like a teen, like the same teens who, at Lambesis, it is her job to follow. But teen speech—particularly girl-teen speech, with its fixation on reported speech (“so she goes,” “and I’m like,” “and he goes”) and its stock vocabulary of accompanying grimaces and gestures—is about using language less to communicate than to fit in. DeeDee uses teen speech to set herself apart, and the result is, for lack of a better word, *really* cool. She doesn’t do the teen thing of climbing half an octave at the end of every sentence. Instead, she drags out her vowels for emphasis, so that if she mildly disagreed with something I’d said she would say “Maalcolm” and if she strongly disagreed with what I’d said she would say “Maaalcolm.”

Baysie is older, just past forty (although you would never guess that), and

FLIP PAGOWSKI





*Reebok's DMX RXT didn't hit as a girl's shoe, but boys in the Bronx call it butter.*



## Los Angeles

### Male

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| Ska         | Drugs      |
| "Star Wars" | Sex        |
| Nintendo 64 | "Swingers" |

### Female

|         |                     |
|---------|---------------------|
| Carols  | Computers           |
| Drugs   | Gothic punk         |
| Hip-hop | Athletic appearance |

## San Francisco

### Male

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Heroin        | Retro              |
| Used clothing | East Coast hip-hop |
| Ben Davis     | Reggae             |

### Female

|                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Hippies            | Makeup         |
| East Coast hip-hop | Michael Jordan |
| Rockabilly         | Nikes          |

## Seattle

### Male

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Retro styles   | Indie movies   |
| Kung fu        | Vodka          |
| Crazy dye jobs | Marilyn Manson |

### Female

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| '50s           | Acid jazz       |
| '80s           | Suits           |
| Short haircuts | Tongue piercing |

## Austin / Dallas

### Male

|            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| Crafty art | Retro                  |
| Clubs      | Environmental activism |
| Heroin     | Old school             |

### Female

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Homosexuality  | Low-riding cars |
| Drugs          | Nike Air Max    |
| Retro clothing | Vinyl           |

## Chicago

### Male

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Raves                   | Boots        |
| Snowboarding            | Jungle music |
| Low-key casual clothing | Drugs        |

## New York

### Male

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Jungle            | Metal      |
| Designer clothing | Aliens     |
| Bright colors     | North Face |
|                   | jackets    |

### Female

|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| Coffee shops | Rock climbing |
| Raves        | Tag matches   |
| Mod culture  | Bootleg pants |

### Female

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Old-lady clothing | Leather          |
| Ski look          | Nautica          |
| Yellow            | Designer clothes |

A TIP SHEET OF COOL Data distilled from the *L Report*, a quarterly that sells for twenty thousand dollars a year.

went to Exeter and Middlebury and had two grandfathers who went to Harvard (although you wouldn't guess that, either). She has curly brown hair and big green eyes and long legs and so much energy that it is hard to imagine her asleep, or resting, or even standing still for longer than thirty seconds. The hunt for cool is an obsession with her, and DeeDee is the same way. DeeDee used to sit on the corner of West Broadway and Prince in SoHo—back when SoHo was cool—and take pictures of everyone who walked by for an entire hour.

Baysie can tell you precisely where she goes on her Reebok coolhunts to find the really cool alternative white kids ("I'd maybe go to Portland and hang out where the skateboarders hang out near that bridge") or which snowboarding mountain has cooler kids—Stratton, in Vermont, or Summit County, in Colorado. (Summit, definitely.) DeeDee can tell you on the basis of the *L Report's* research exactly how far Dallas is behind New York in coolness (from six to eight months). Baysie is convinced that Los Angeles is not happening right

now: "In the early nineteen-nineties a lot more was coming from L.A. They had a big trend with the whole Melrose Avenue look—the stupid goatees, the shorter hair. It was cleaned-up after-grunge. There were a lot of places you could go to buy vinyl records. It was a strong place to go for looks. Then it went back to being horrible." DeeDee is convinced that Japan is happening: "I linked onto this future-technology thing two years ago. Now look at it, it's huge. It's the whole resurgence of Nike—Nike being larger than life. I went to Japan

HIROSHI TANABE



and saw the kids just bailing the most technologically advanced Nikes with their little dresses and little outfits and I'm like, 'Whoa, this is trippy!' It's performance mixed with fashion. It's really superheavy." Baysie has a theory that Liverpool is cool right now because it's the birthplace of the whole "lad" look, which involves soccer blokes in the pubs going superdressy and wearing Dolce & Gabbana and Polo Sport and Reebok Classics on their feet. But when I asked DeeDee about that, she just rolled her eyes: "Sometimes Baysie goes off on these tangents. *Man*, I love that woman!"

I used to think that if I talked to Baysie and DeeDee long enough I could write a coolhunting manual, an encyclopedia of cool. But then I realized that the manual would have so many footnotes and caveats that it would be unreadable. Coolhunting is not about the articulation of a coherent philosophy of cool. It's just a collection of spontaneous observations and predictions that differ from one moment to the next and from one coolhunter to the next. Ask a coolhunter where the baggy-jeans look came from, for example, and you might get any number of answers: urban black kids mimicking the jailhouse look, skateboarders looking for room to move, snowboarders trying not to look like skiers, or, alternatively, all three at once, in some grand concordance.

Or take the question of exactly how Tommy Hilfiger—a forty-five-year-old white guy from Greenwich, Connecticut, doing all-American preppy clothes—came to be the designer of choice for urban black America. Some say it was all about the early and visible endorsement given Hilfiger by the hip-hop auteur Grand Puba, who wore a dark-green-and-blue Tommy jacket over a white Tommy T-shirt as he leaned on his black Lamborghini on the cover of the hugely influential "Grand Puba 2000" CD, and whose love for Hilfiger soon spread to other rappers. (Who could forget the rhymes of Mobb Deep? "Tommy was my nigga / And couldn't figure / How me and Hilfiger / used to move through with vigor.") Then I had lunch with one of Hilfiger's designers, a twenty-six-year-old named Ulrich (Ubi) Simpson, who has a Puerto Rican mother and a Dutch-Venezuelan father, plays lacrosse, snowboards, surfs the long

board, goes to hip-hop concerts, listens to Jungle, Edith Piaf, opera, rap, and Metallica, and has working with him on his design team a twenty-seven-year-old black guy from Montclair with dreadlocks, a twenty-two-year-old Asian-American who lives on the Lower East Side, a twenty-five-year-old South Asian guy from Fiji, and a twenty-one-year-old white graffiti artist from Queens. That's when it occurred to me that maybe the reason Tommy Hilfiger can make white culture cool to black culture is that he has people working for him who are cool in both cultures simultaneously. Then again, maybe it *was* all Grand Puba. Who knows?

One day last month, Baysie took me on a coolhunt to the Bronx and Harlem, lugging a big black canvas bag with twenty-four different shoes that Reebok is about to bring out, and as we drove down Fordham Road, she had her head out the window like a little kid, checking out what everyone on the street was wearing. We went to Dr. Jay's, which is the cool place to buy sneakers in the Bronx, and Baysie crouched down on the floor and started pulling the shoes out of her bag one by one, soliciting opinions from customers who gathered around and asking one question after another, in rapid sequence. One guy she listened closely to was maybe eighteen or nineteen, with a diamond stud in his ear and a thin beard. He was wearing a Polo baseball cap, a brown leather jacket, and the big, oversized leather boots that are everywhere uptown right now. Baysie would hand him a shoe and he would hold it, look at the top, and move it up and down and flip it over. The first one he didn't like: "*Ob-kay*." The second one he hated: he made a growling sound in his throat even before Baysie could give it to him, as if to say, "Put it back in the bag—now!" But when she handed him a new DMX RXT—a low-cut run/walk shoe in white and blue and mesh with a translucent "ice" sole, which retails for a hundred and ten dollars—he looked at it long and hard and shook his head in pure admiration and just said two words, dragging each of them out: "No *doubt*."

Baysie was interested in what he was saying, because the DMX RXT she had was a girls' shoe that actually hadn't been doing all that well. Later, she explained to me that the fact that the boys loved

the shoe was critical news, because it suggested that Reebok had a potential hit if it just switched the shoe to the men's section. How she managed to distill this piece of information from the crowd of teen-agers around her, how she made any sense of the two dozen shoes in her bag, most of which (to my eyes, anyway) looked pretty much the same, and how she knew which of the teens to really focus on was a mystery. Baysie is a Wasp from New England, and she crouched on the floor in Dr. Jay's for almost an hour, talking and joking with the homeboys without a trace of condescension or self-consciousness.

Near the end of her visit, a young boy walked up and sat down on the bench next to her. He was wearing a black woollen cap with white stripes pulled low, a blue North Face pleated down jacket, a pair of baggy Guess jeans, and, on his feet, Nike Air Jordans. He couldn't have been more than thirteen. But when he started talking you could see Baysie's eyes light up, because somehow she knew the kid was the real thing.

"How many pairs of shoes do you buy a month?" Baysie asked.

"Two," the kid answered. "And if at the end I find one more I like I get to buy that, too."

Baysie was onto him. "Does your mother spoil you?"

The kid blushed, but a friend next to him was laughing. "Whatever he wants, he gets."

Baysie laughed, too. She had the DMX RXT in his size. He tried them on. He rocked back and forth, testing them. He looked back at Baysie. He was dead serious now: "Make sure these come out."

Baysie handed him the new "Rush" Emmitt Smith shoe due out in the fall. One of the boys had already pronounced it "phat," and another had looked through the marbled-foam cradle in the heel and cried out in delight, "This is bug!" But this kid was the acid test, because this kid knew cool. He paused. He looked at it hard. "Reebok," he said, soberly and carefully, "is trying to get *butter*."

In the car on the way back to Manhattan, Baysie repeated it twice. "Not better. *Butter*! That kid could totally tell you what he thinks." Baysie had spent an hour coolhunting in a shoe store and



found out that Reebok's efforts were winning the highest of hip-hop praise. "He was so *fucking* smart."

**I**F you want to understand how trends work, and why coolhunters like Bay-sie and DeeDee have become so important, a good place to start is with what's known as diffusion research, which is the study of how ideas and innovations spread. Diffusion researchers do things like spending five years studying the adoption of irrigation techniques in a Colombian mountain village, or developing complex matrices to map the spread of new math in the Pittsburgh school system. What they do may seem like a far cry from, say, how the Tommy Hilfiger thing spread from Harlem to every suburban mall in the country, but it really isn't: both are about how new ideas spread from one person to the next.

One of the most famous diffusion studies is Bruce Ryan and Neal Gross's analysis of the spread of hybrid seed corn in Greene County, Iowa, in the nineteen-thirties. The new seed corn was introduced there in about 1928, and it was superior in every respect to the seed that had been used by farmers for decades.

But it wasn't adopted all at once. Of two hundred and fifty-nine farmers studied by Ryan and Gross, only a handful had started planting the new seed by 1933. In 1934, sixteen took the plunge. In 1935, twenty-one more followed; the next year, there were thirty-six, and the year after that a whopping sixty-one. The succeeding figures were then forty-six, thirty-six, fourteen, and three, until, by 1941, all but two of the two hundred and fifty-nine farmers studied were using the new seed. In the language of diffusion research, the handful of farmers who started trying hybrid seed corn at the very beginning of the thirties were the "innovators," the adventurous ones. The slightly larger group that followed them was the "early adopters." They were the opinion leaders in the community, the respected, thoughtful people who watched and analyzed what those wild innovators were doing and then did it themselves. Then came the big bulge of farmers in 1936, 1937, and 1938—the "early majority" and the "late majority," which is to say the deliberate and the skeptical masses, who would never try anything until the most respected farmers had tried it. Only after they had been

converted did the "laggards," the most traditional of all, follow suit. The critical thing about this sequence is that it is almost entirely interpersonal. According to Ryan and Gross, only the innovators relied to any great extent on radio advertising and farm journals and seed salesmen in making their decision to switch to the hybrid. Everyone else made his decision overwhelmingly because of the example and the opinions of his neighbors and peers.

Isn't this just how fashion works? A few years ago, the classic brushed-suede Hush Puppies with the lightweight crêpe sole—the moc-toe oxford known as the Duke and the slip-on with the golden buckle known as the Columbia—were selling barely sixty-five thousand pairs a year. The company was trying to walk away from the whole suede casual look entirely. It wanted to do "aspirational" shoes: "active casuals" in smooth leather, like the Mall Walker, with a Comfort Curve technology outsole and a heel stabilizer—the kind of shoes you see in Kinney's for \$39.95. But then something strange started happening. Two Hush Puppies executives—Owen Baxter and Jeff Lewis—were doing a fashion shoot for their Mall Walkers and ran into a creative consultant from Manhattan named Jeffrey Miller, who informed them that the Dukes and the Columbias weren't dead, they were dead chic. "We were being told," Baxter recalls, "that there were areas in the Village, in SoHo, where the shoes were selling—in resale shops—and that people were wearing the old Hush Puppies. They were going to the ma-and-pa stores, the little stores that still carried them, and there was this authenticity of being able to say, 'I am wearing an original pair of Hush Puppies.'"

Baxter and Lewis—tall, solid, fair-haired Midwestern guys with thick, shiny wedding bands—are shoe men, first and foremost. Baxter was working the cash register at his father's shoe store in Mount Prospect, Illinois, at the age of thirteen. Lewis was doing inventory in his father's shoe store in Pontiac, Michigan, at the age of seven. Baxter was in the National Guard during the 1968 Democratic Convention, in Chicago, and was stationed across



*"It's always cozy in here. We're insulated by layers of bureaucracy."*



## WAKEFULNESS

An immodest little white wine, some scattered seraphs,  
recollections of the Fall—tell me,  
has anyone made a spongier representation, chased  
fewer demons out of the parking lot  
where we all held hands?

Little by little the idea of the true way returned to me.  
I was touched by your care,  
reduced to fawning excuses.  
Everything was spotless in the little house of our desire,  
the clock ticked on and on, happy about  
being apprenticed to eternity. A gavotte of dust motes  
came to replace my seeing. Everything was as though  
it had happened long ago  
in ancient peach-colored funny papers  
wherein the law of true opposites was ordained  
casually. Then the book opened by itself  
and read to us: "You pack of liars,  
of course tempted by the crossroads, but I like each  
and every one of you with a peculiar sapphire intensity.  
Look, here is where I failed at first.  
The client leaves. History natters on,  
rolling distractedly on these shores. Each day, dawn  
condenses like a very large star, bakes no bread,  
shoes the faithless. How convenient if it's a dream."

In the next sleeping car was madness.  
An urgent languor installed itself  
as far as the cabbage-hemmed horizons. And if I put a little  
bit of myself in this time, stoppered the liquor that is our selves'  
truant exchanges, brandished my intentions  
for once? But only I get  
something out of this memory.  
A kindly gnome  
of fear perched on my dashboard once, but we had all  
been instructed  
to ignore the conditions of the chase. Here, it  
seems to grow lighter with each passing century. No matter  
how you twist it,  
life stays frozen in the headlights.  
Funny, none of us heard the roar.

—JOHN ASHBERRY

the street from the Conrad Hilton downtown, right in the middle of things. Today, the two men work out of Rockford, Michigan (population thirty-eight hundred), where Hush Puppies has been making the Dukes and the Columbias in an old factory down by the Rogue River for almost forty years. They took me to the plant when I was in Rockford. In a crowded, noisy, low-slung building, factory workers stand in long rows, gluing,

stapling, and sewing together shoes in dozens of bright colors, and the two executives stopped at each production station and described it in detail. Lewis and Baxter know shoes. But they would be the first to admit that they don't know cool. "Miller was saying that there is something going on with the shoes—that Isaac Mizrahi was wearing the shoes for his personal use," Lewis told me. We were seated around the confer-

ence table in the Hush Puppies headquarters in Rockford, with the snow and the trees outside and a big water tower behind us. "I think it's fair to say that at the time we had no idea who Isaac Mizrahi was."

By late 1994, things had begun to happen in a rush. First, the designer John Bartlett called. He wanted to use Hush Puppies as accessories in his spring collection. Then Anna Sui called. Miller, the man from Manhattan, flew out to Michigan to give advice on a new line ("Of course, packing my own food and thinking about 'Fargo' in the corner of my mind"). A few months later, in Los Angeles, the designer Joel Fitzpatrick put a twenty-five-foot inflatable basset hound on the roof of his store on La Brea Avenue and gutted his adjoining art gallery to turn it into a Hush Puppies department, and even before he opened—while he was still painting and putting up shelves—Pee-wee Herman walked in and asked for a couple of pairs. Pee-wee Herman! "It was total word of mouth. I didn't even have a sign back then," Fitzpatrick recalls. In 1995, the company sold four hundred and thirty thousand pairs of the classic Hush Puppies. In 1996, it sold a million six hundred thousand, and that was only scratching the surface, because in Europe and the rest of the world, where Hush Puppies have a huge following—where they might outsell the American market four to one—the revival was just beginning.

The cool kids who started wearing old Dukes and Columbias from thrift shops were the innovators. Pee-wee Herman, wandering in off the street, was an early adopter. The million six hundred thousand people who bought Hush Puppies last year are the early majority, jumping in because the really cool people have already blazed the trail. Hush Puppies are moving through the country just the way hybrid seed corn moved through Greene County—all of which illustrates what coolhunters can and cannot do. If Jeffrey Miller had been wrong—if cool people hadn't been digging through the thrift shops for Hush Puppies—and he had arbitrarily decided that Baxter and Lewis should try to convince non-cool people that the shoes were cool, it wouldn't have worked. You can't convince the late majority that Hush Puppies are cool, because the late



majority makes its coolness decisions on the basis of what the early majority is doing, and you can't convince the early majority, because the early majority is looking at the early adopters, and you can't convince the early adopters, because they take their cues from the innovators. The innovators do get their cool ideas from people other than their peers, but the fact is that they are the last people who can be convinced by a marketing campaign that a pair of suede shoes is cool. These are, after all, the people who spent hours sifting through thrift-store bins. And why did they do that? Because their definition of cool is doing something that nobody else is doing. A company can intervene in the cool cycle. It can put its shoes on really cool celebrities and on fashion runways and on MTV. It can accelerate the transition from the innovator to the early adopter and on to the early majority. But it can't just manufacture cool out of thin air, and that's the second rule of cool.

At the peak of the Hush Puppies craziness last year, Hush Puppies won the prize for best accessory at the Council of Fashion Designers' awards dinner, at Lincoln Center. The award was accepted by the Hush Puppies president, Louis Dubrow, who came out wearing a pair of custom-made black patent-leather Hush Puppies and stood there blinking and looking at the assembled crowd as if it were the last scene of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." It was a strange moment. There was the president of the Hush Puppies company, of Rockford, Michigan, population thirty-eight hundred, sharing a stage with Calvin Klein and Donna Karan and Isaac Mizrahi—and all because some kids in the East Village began combing through thrift shops for old Dukes. Fashion was at the mercy of those kids, whoever they were, and it was a wonderful thing if the kids picked you, but a scary thing, too, because it meant that cool was something

you could not control. You needed someone to find cool and tell you what it was.

WHEN Baysie Wightman went to Dr. Jay's, she was looking for customer response to the new shoes Reebok had planned for the fourth quarter of 1997 and the first quarter of 1998. This kind of customer testing is critical at Reebok, because the last decade has



*Baysie Wightman picked up on the rebellion against the hundred-and-twenty-five-dollar sneaker.*

not been kind to the company. In 1987, it had a third of the American athletic-shoe market, well ahead of Nike. Last year, it had sixteen per cent. "The kid in the store would say, 'I'd like this shoe if your logo wasn't on it,'" E. Scott Morris, who's a senior designer for Reebok, told me. "That's kind of a punch in the mouth. But we've all seen it. You go into a shoe store. The kid picks up the shoe and says, 'Ah, man, this is nice.' He turns the shoe around and around. He looks at it underneath. He looks at the side and he goes, 'Ah, this is Reebok,' and says, 'I ain't buying this,' and puts the shoe down and walks out. And you go, 'You was just digging it a minute ago. What happened?'" Somewhere along the way, the company lost its cool, and Reebok now faces the task not only of

rebuilding its image but of making the shoes so cool that the kids in the store *can't* put them down.

Every few months, then, the company's coolhunters go out into the field with prototypes of the upcoming shoes to find out what kids really like, and come back to recommend the necessary changes. The prototype of one recent Emmitt Smith shoe, for example, had a piece of molded rubber on the end of the tongue as a design element; it was supposed to give the shoe a certain "richness," but the kids said they thought it looked overbuilt. Then Reebok gave the shoes to the Boston College football team for wear-testing, and when they got the shoes back they found out that all the football players had cut out the rubber component with scissors. As messages go, this was hard to miss. The tongue piece wasn't cool, and on the final version of the shoe it was gone. The rule of thumb at Reebok is that if the kids in Chicago, New York, and Detroit all like a shoe, it's a guaranteed hit. More than likely, though, the coolhunt is going to turn up subtle differences from city to city, so that once the coolhunters come back the designers have to find out some way

to synthesize what was heard, and pick out just those things that all the kids seemed to agree on. In New York, for example, kids in Harlem are more sophisticated and fashion-forward than kids in the Bronx, who like things a little more colorful and glitzy. Brooklyn, meanwhile, is conservative and preppy, more like Washington, D.C. For reasons no one really knows, Reeboks are coolest in Philadelphia. In Philly, in fact, the Reebok Classics are so huge they are known simply as National Anthems, as in "I'll have a pair of blue Anthems in nine and a half." Philadelphia is Reebok's innovator town. From there trends move along the East Coast, trickling all the way to Charlotte, North Carolina.

Reebok has its headquarters in Stoughton, Massachusetts, outside Boston—



in a modern corporate park right off Route 24. There are basketball and tennis courts next to the building, and a health club on the ground floor that you can look directly into from the parking lot. The front lobby is adorned with shrines for all of Reebok's most prominent athletes—shrines complete with dramatic action photographs, their sports jerseys, and a pair of their signature shoes—and the halls are filled with so many young, determinedly athletic people that when I visited Reebok headquarters I suddenly wished I'd packed my gym clothes in case someone challenged me to wind sprints. At Stoughton, I met with a handful of the company's top designers and marketing executives in a long conference room on the third floor. In the course of two hours, they put one pair of shoes after another on the table in front of me, talking excitedly about each sneaker's prospects, because the feeling at Reebok is that things are finally turning around. The basketball shoe that Reebok brought out last winter for Allen Iverson, the star rookie guard for the Philadelphia 76ers, for example, is one of the hottest shoes in the country. Dr. Jay's sold out of Iversons in two days, compared with the week it took the store to sell out of Nike's new Air Jordans. Iverson himself is brash and charismatic and faster from foul line to foul line than anyone else in the league. He's the equivalent of those kids in the East Village who began wearing Hush Puppies way back when. He's an innovator, and the hope at Reebok is that if he gets big enough the whole company can ride back to coolness on his coattails, the way Nike rode to coolness on the coattails of Michael Jordan. That's why Baysie was so excited when the kid said Reebok was trying to get *butter* when he looked at the Rush and the DMX RXT: it was a sign, albeit a small one, that the indefinable, abstract thing called cool was coming back.

When Baysie comes back from a

coolhunt, she sits down with marketing experts and sales representatives and designers, and reconnects them to the street, making sure they have the right shoes going to the right places at the right price. When she got back from the Bronx, for example, the first thing she did was tell all these people they had to get a new men's DMX RXT out, *fast*, because the kids on the street loved the



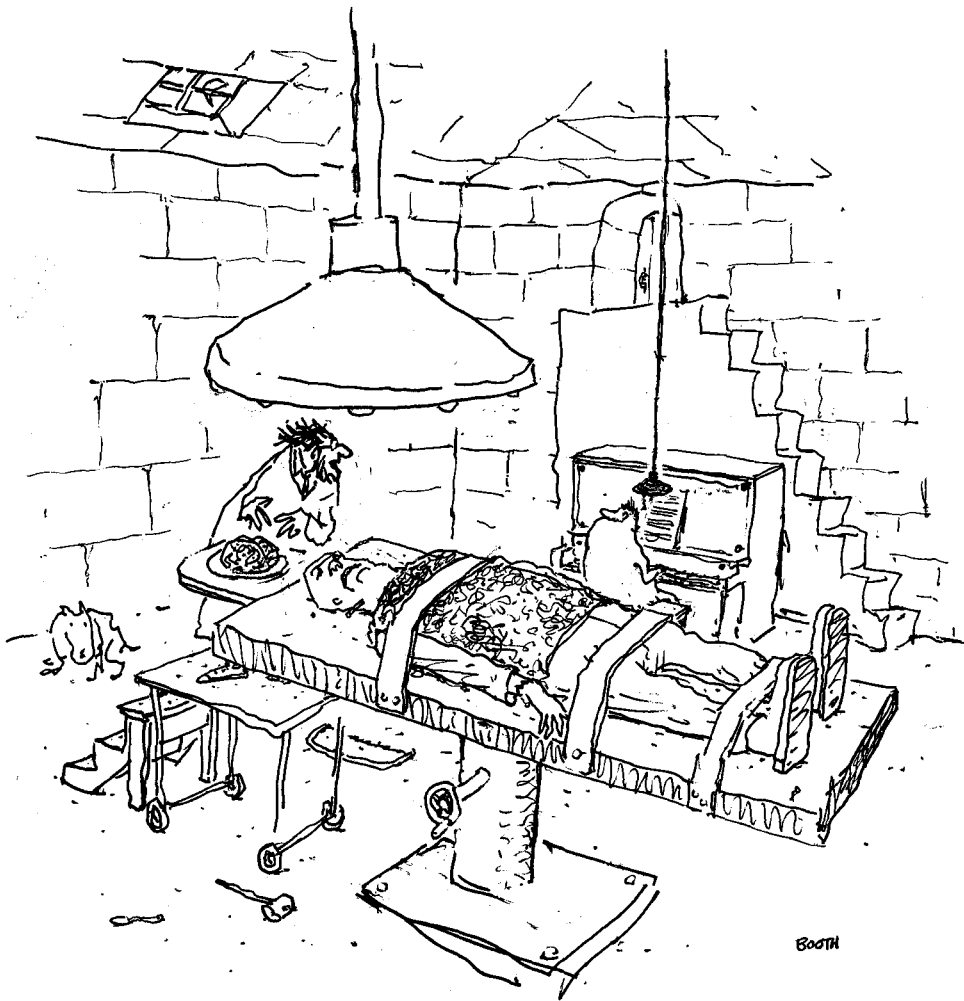
DeeDee Gordon can tell you exactly how far Dallas is behind New York in coolness—from six to eight months.

women's version. "It's hotter than we realized," she told them. The coolhunter's job in this instance is very specific. What DeeDee does, on the other hand, is a little more ambitious. With the *L Report*, she tries to construct a kind of grand matrix of cool, comprising not just shoes but everything kids like, and not just kids of certain East Coast urban markets but kids all over. DeeDee and her staff put it out four times a year, in six different versions—for New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Austin-Dallas, Seattle, and Chicago—and then sell it to manufacturers, retailers, and ad agencies (among others) for twenty thousand dollars a year. They go to each city and find the coolest bars and clubs, and ask the coolest kids to fill out questionnaires. The information is then divided into six catego-

ries—You Saw It Here First, Entertainment and Leisure, Clothing and Accessories, Personal and Individual, Aspirations, and Food and Beverages—which are, in turn, broken up into dozens of subcategories, so that Personal and Individual, for example, includes Cool Date, Cool Evening, Free Time, Favorite Possession, and on and on. The information in those subcategories is subdivided again by sex and by age bracket (14-18, 19-24, 25-30), and then, as a control, the *L Report* gives you the corresponding set of preferences for "mainstream" kids.

Few coolhunters bother to analyze trends with this degree of specificity. DeeDee's biggest competitor, for example, is something called the *Hot Sheet*, out of Manhattan. It uses a panel of three thousand kids a year from across the country and divides up their answers by sex and age, but it doesn't distinguish between regions, or between trend-setting and mainstream respondents. So what you're really getting is what *all* kids think is cool—not what cool kids think is cool, which is a considerably different piece of information. Janine Misdorn and Joanne DeLuca, who run the Sputnik coolhunting group out of the garment district in Manhattan, meanwhile, favor an entirely impressionistic approach, sending out coolhunters with video cameras to talk to kids on the ground that it's too difficult to get cool kids to fill out questionnaires. Once, when I was visiting the Sputnik girls—as Misdorn and DeLuca are known on the street, because they look alike and their first names are so similar and both have the same *awesome* New York accents—they showed me a video of the girl they believe was the patient zero of the whole eighties revival going on right now. It was back in September of 1993. Joanne and Janine were on Seventh Avenue, outside the Fashion Institute of Technology, doing random street interviews for a major jeans company, and, quite by accident, they ran into this nineteen-year-old raver. She had close-





"Some Debussy, Igor."

cropped hair, which was green at the top, and at the temples was shaved even closer and dyed pink. She had rings and studs all over her face, and a thick collection of silver tribal jewelry around her neck, and vintage jeans. She looked into the camera and said, "The sixties came in and then the seventies came in and I think it's ready to come back to the eighties. It's totally eighties: the eye makeup, the clothes. It's totally going back to that." Immediately, Joanne and Janine started asking around. "We talked to a few kids on the Lower East Side who said they were feeling the need to start breaking out their old Michael Jackson jackets," Joanne said. "They were joking about it. They weren't doing it yet. But they were going to, you know? They were saying, 'We're getting the urge to break out our Members Only jackets.'" That was right when Joanne and Janine were just starting up; calling the eighties revival was their first big

break, and now they put out a full-blown videotaped report twice a year which is a collection of clips of interviews with *extremely* progressive people.

What DeeDee argues, though, is that cool is too subtle and too variegated to be captured with these kind of broad strokes. Cool is a set of dialects, not a language. The *L Report* can tell you, for example, that nineteen-to-twenty-four-year-old male trendsetters in Seattle would most like to meet, among others, King Solomon and Dr. Seuss, and that nineteen-to-twenty-four-year-old female trendsetters in San Francisco have turned their backs on Calvin Klein, Nintendo Gameboy, and sex. What's cool right now? Among male New York trendsetters: North Face jackets, rubber and latex, khakis, and the rock band Kiss. Among female trendsetters: ska music, old-lady clothing, and cyber tech. In Chicago, snowboarding is huge among trendsetters of both sexes and all ages.

Women over nineteen are into short hair, while those in their teens have embraced mod culture, rock climbing, tag watches, and bootleg pants. In Austin-Dallas, meanwhile, twenty-five-to-thirty-year-old women trendsetters are into hats, heroin, computers, cigars, Adidas, and velvet, while men in their twenties are into video games and hemp. In all, the typical *L Report* runs over one hundred pages. But with that flood of data comes an obsolescence disclaimer: "The fluctuating nature of the trendsetting market makes keeping up with trends a difficult task." By the spring, in other words, everything may have changed.

The key to coolhunting, then, is to look for cool people first and cool things later, and not the other way around. Since cool things are always changing, you can't look for them, because the very fact they are cool means you have no idea what to look for. What you would be doing is thinking back on what was cool before and extrapolating, which is about as useful as presuming that because the Dow rose ten points yesterday it will rise another ten points today. Cool people, on the other hand, are a constant.

When I was in California, I met Salvador Barbier, who had been described to me by a coolhunter as "the Michael Jordan of skateboarding."

He was tall and lean and languid, with a cowboy's insouciance, and we drove through the streets of Long Beach at fifteen miles an hour in a white late-model Ford Mustang, a car he had bought as a kind of ironic status gesture ("It would look good if I had a Polo jacket or maybe Nautica," he said) to go with his '62 Econoline van and his '64 T-bird. Sal told me that he and his friends, who are all in their mid-twenties, recently took to dressing up as if they were in eighth grade again and gathering together—having a "rally"—on old BMX bicycles in front of their local 7-Eleven. "I'd wear muscle shirts, like Def Leppard or Foghat or some old heavy-metal band, and tight, tight tapered Levi's, and Vans on my feet—big, like, checkered Vans or striped Vans or camouflage Vans—and then wristbands and gloves with the fingers cut off. It was total eighties fashion. You had to look like that to participate in the rally. We had those denim



jackets with patches on the back and combs that hung out the back pocket. We went without I.D.s, because we'd have to have someone else buy us beers." At this point, Sal laughed. He was driving really slowly and staring straight ahead and talking in a low drawl—the coolhunter's dream. "We'd ride to this bar and I'd have to carry my bike inside, because we have really expensive bikes, and when we got inside people would freak out. They'd say, 'Omigod,' and I was asking them if they wanted to go for a ride on the handlebars. They were like, 'What is wrong with you. My boyfriend used to dress like that in the eighth grade!' And I was like, 'He was probably a lot cooler than, too.'"

This is just the kind of person DeeDee wants. "I'm looking for somebody who is an individual, who has definitely set himself apart from everybody else, who doesn't look like his peers. I've run into trendsetters who look completely Joe Regular Guy. I can see Joe Regular Guy at a club listening to some totally hardcore band playing, and I say to myself 'Omigod, what's that guy doing here?' and that totally intrigues me, and I have to walk up to him and say, 'Hey, you're really into this band. What's up? You know what I mean? I look at everything. If I see Joe Regular Guy sitting in a coffee shop and everyone around him has blue hair, I'm going to gravitate toward him, because, hey, what's Joe Regular Guy doing in a coffee shop with people with blue hair?'"

We were sitting outside the Fred Segal store in West Hollywood. I was wearing a very conservative white Brooks Brothers button-down and a pair of Levi's, and DeeDee looked first at my shirt and then my pants and dissolved into laughter. "I mean, I might even go up to *you* in a cool place."

Picking the right person is harder than it sounds, though. Piney Kahn, who works for DeeDee, says, "There

are a lot of people in the gray area. You've got these kids who dress ultra funky and have their own style. Then you realize they're just running after their friends." The trick is not just to be able to tell who is different but to be able to tell when that difference represents something truly cool. It's a gut thing. You have to somehow just *know*. DeeDee hired Piney because Piney clearly *knows*: she is twenty-four and used to work with the Beastie Boys and has the formidable self-possession of someone who is not only cool herself but whose parents were cool. "I mean," she says, "they named me after a tree."

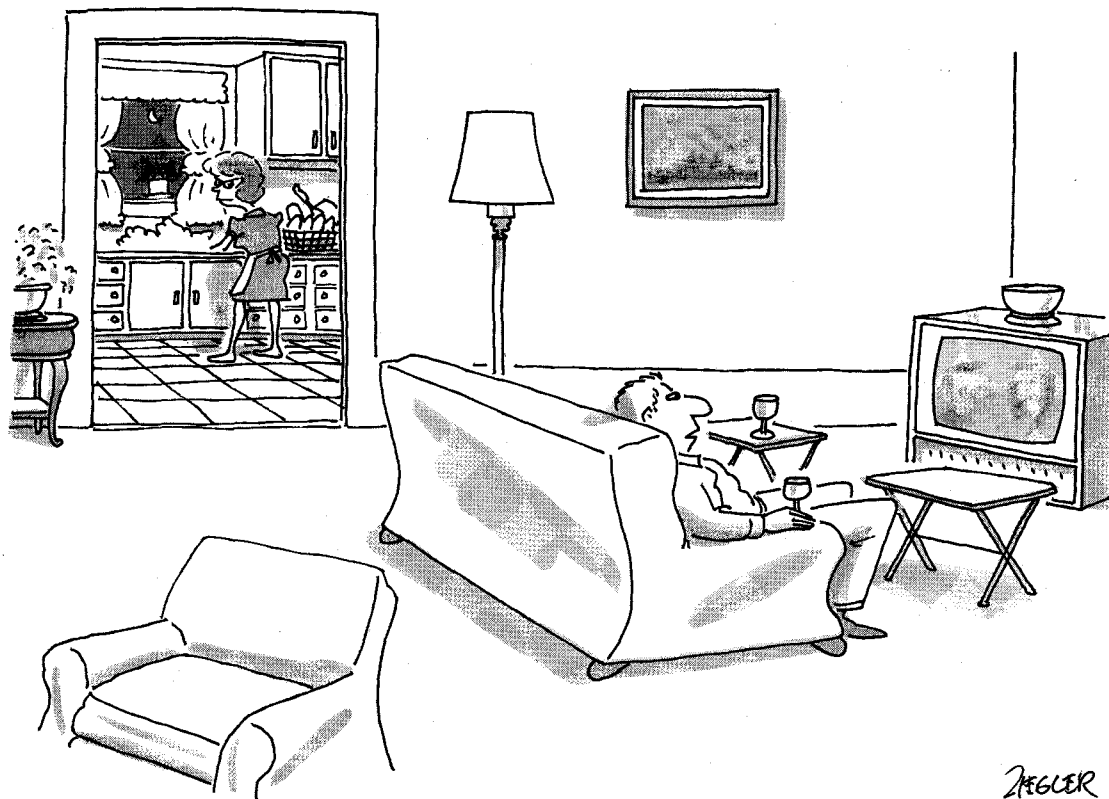
Piney and DeeDee said that they once tried to hire someone as a coolhunter who was not, himself, cool, and it was a disaster.

"You can give them the boundaries," Piney explained. "You can say that if people shop at Banana Republic and listen to Alanis Morissette they're probably not trendsetters. But then they might go out and assume that everyone who does that is not a trendsetter, and not look at the other things."

"I mean, I myself might go into Banana Republic and buy a T-shirt," DeeDee chimed in.

Their non-cool coolhunter just didn't have that certain instinct, that sense that

told him when it was O.K. to deviate from the manual. Because he wasn't cool, he didn't know cool, and that's the essence of the third rule of cool: you have to be one to know one. That's why Baysie is still on top of this business at forty-one. "It's easier for me to tell you what kid is cool than to tell you what things are cool," she says. But that's all she needs to know. In this sense, the third rule of cool fits perfectly into the second: the second rule says that cool cannot be manufactured, only observed, and the third says that it can only be observed by those who are themselves cool. And, of course, the first rule says that it cannot accurately be observed at all, because the act of discovering cool causes cool to take flight, so if you add all three together they describe a closed loop, the hermeneutic circle of coolhunting, a phenomenon whereby not only can the uncool not see cool but cool cannot even be adequately described to them. Baysie says that she can see a coat on one of her friends and think it's not cool but then see the same coat on DeeDee and think that it is cool. It is not possible to be cool, in other words, unless you are—in some larger sense—already cool, and so the phenomenon that the uncool cannot see



*"By the way, hon, great food, great wine, great you."*



and cannot have described to them is also something that they cannot ever attain, because if they did it would no longer be cool. Coolhunting represents the ascendancy, in the marketplace, of high school.

Once, I was visiting DeeDee at her house in Laurel Canyon when one of her *L Report* assistants, Jonas Vail, walked in. He'd just come back from Niketown on Wilshire Boulevard, where he'd bought seven hundred dollars' worth of the latest sneakers to go with the three hundred dollars' worth of skateboard shoes he'd bought earlier in the afternoon. Jonas is tall and expressionless, with a peacoat, dark jeans, and short-cropped black hair. "Jonas is good," DeeDee says. "He works with me on everything. That guy knows more pop culture. You know: What was the name of the store Mrs. Garrett owned on 'The Facts of Life'? He knows all the names of the *extras* from eighties sitcoms. I can't believe someone like him exists. He's fucking unbelievable. Jonas can spot a cool person a *mile* away."

Jonas takes the boxes of shoes and starts unpacking them on the couch next to DeeDee. He picks up a pair of the new Nike ACG hiking boots, and says, "All the Japanese in Niketown were really into these." He hands the shoes to DeeDee.

"Of course they were!" she says. "The Japanese are all into the tech-looking shit. Look how exaggerated it is, how bulbous." DeeDee has very ambivalent feelings about Nike, because she thinks its marketing has got out of hand. When she was in the New York Niketown with a girlfriend recently, she says, she started getting light-headed and freaked out. "It's cult, cult, cult. It was like, 'Hello, are we all drinking the Kool-Aid here?'" But this shoe she loves. It's Dr. Jay's in the Bronx all over again. DeeDee turns the shoe around and around in the air, tapping the big clear-blue plastic bubble on the side—the visible Air-Sole unit—with one finger. "It's so fucking rad. It looks like a platypus!" In front of me, there is a pair of Nike's new shoes for the basketball player Jason Kidd.

I pick it up. "This looks . . . cool," I venture uncertainly.

DeeDee is on the couch, where she's surrounded by shoeboxes and sneakers and white tissue paper, and she looks up reprovingly because, of course, I don't get it. I *can't* get it. "Beyooond cool, Maalcolm. Beyooond cool." ♦

## POSTCARD FROM LONDON

# GEAR

*Can the young eccentrics of the suddenly hip  
British fashion scene survive success?*

BY HILTON ALS

TWO months ago, in Paris, late one afternoon, a crowd of designers, buyers, journalists, stylists, unemployed models, couture patrons, and one or two lapdogs waited impatiently in a flickering Grecian grove in the École des Beaux-Arts to view Alexander McQueen's début couture collection for Givenchy. Hubert de Givenchy, who founded his *maison* in 1952, promoted his clothes through the late Audrey Hepburn, who, in film after film, immortalized the designer's devotion to simplicity of cut, narrow waistlines, and luxurious fabrics. Even after the British designer John Galiano took over at Givenchy, in 1995, the line remained a fairly conventional affair. Last October, however, when Bernard Arnault, the chairman of Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (L.V.M.H.), announced Galiano's transfer to Dior and the arrival of McQueen to take his place, the fashion world was incredulous.

McQueen's approach to fashion had always been anti-fashion, an irreverent gloss on time-honored traditions. (One of his earlier, ready-to-wear collections stressed his fascination with the derriere through wickedly low-slung trousers called "bumsters"; another featured latex dresses covered with locusts.) It was difficult even for McQueen's admirers to imagine him overseeing the complications of a couture house with its *petites mains* painstakingly constructing costumes that sell for thousands of francs, dollars, or pounds. Now the arbiters of money and taste had gathered in the glass-domed hall of the École to see if Arnault's gamble would pay off.

Seated in the front row at the couture show were the designer Azzedine Alaïa, the *Vogue* editors Anna Wintour and Hamish Bowles, the couture client Anne Bass, the German photographer Peter Lindbergh, and Isabella Blow, a former fashion editor

for British *Vogue*, who is now McQueen's muse. (Blow had first met McQueen when she bought his entire master's graduate collection after it was shown at Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design, his alma mater.) Her translucent white skin, deep-red lipstick, and black satellite-dish-shaped hat contrasted starkly with the staid appearance of the women who sat opposite her, separated from this representative of the new British fashion by the catwalk. They eyed her with deep suspicion, as if she were a stray thread hanging from the hem of a custom-made skirt.

After a delay of almost an hour, the clothes began to appear. First item: a gold-embroidered white satin coat with a huge train, over a gold lace bodysuit. The model walked the runway with a look of haughty indifference—not an easy look to carry off under the hat she was modelling, by the young London-based milliner Philip Treacy, a completely vertical affair made of straw. A French fashion journalist whispered to her companion, "Oo-la-la. If he continues with that kind of styling, he'll lose them."

On and on, one after another, fifty-five pieces were shown, all variations—mostly in white and gold—on McQueen's obsessions: Victorian nymphets in silk; nineteenth-century cropped military jackets; butterflies embedded in a white organza cloak; a sailor's outfit that evoked Marlene Dietrich. At one point—in keeping with the somewhat muddled Greek theme—a model meant to resemble Maria Callas, wearing a white dress and a big black bubble hairdo, traversed the catwalk as if enraptured at finding herself in such a fairyland of good taste. Isabella Blow applauded every outfit with great enthusiasm. The ladies of couture did not; they were taken aback, it seemed, by the sheer excess of youthful vitality and confusion parading before them in out-

PORTFOLIO BY MICHAEL ROBERTS



# DANGEROUS LONDON!



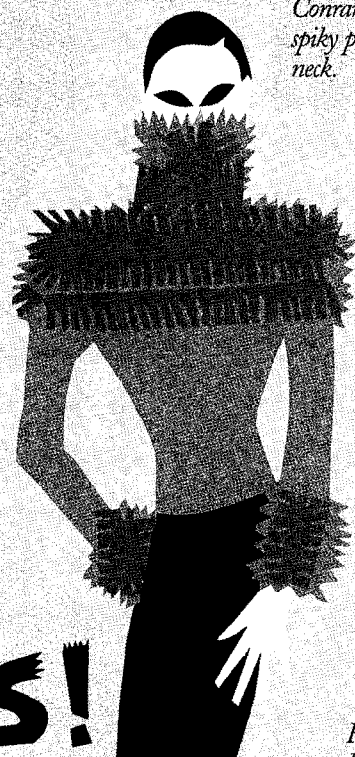
*Sharp horns  
on Alexander  
McQueen's  
hide jacket,  
shown over  
severely  
bleached  
jeans.*



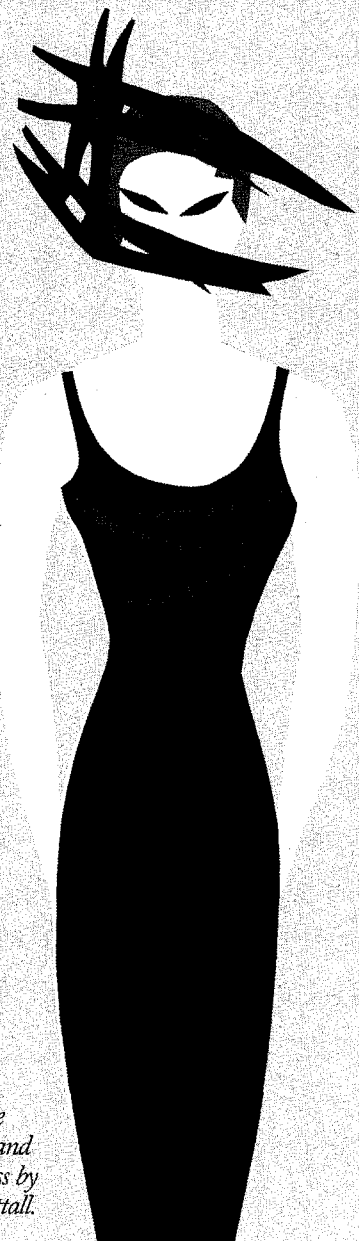
*Razor-sharp  
brim on Philip  
Treacy's bat.*



*Bone headdress and  
cobweb knit at  
Julien MacDonald.*



*Jasper  
Conran's  
spiky polo  
neck.*



*Featherlike  
headpiece and  
simple dress by  
Sonja Nuttall.*

# SPIKES!



rageous clothing. The distinctly *now* was clearly passing them by.

After the show, a number of fashion cognoscenti stood outside in the chilly courtyard of the École des Beaux-Arts and considered Alexander McQueen. "I thought it was quite beautiful, the white, the gold," Adrian Joffe, the managing director of Comme des Garçons, said, neglecting to mention that he and his wife—Rei Kawakubo, who is Comme des Garçons's chief executive officer—had already booked McQueen to model in their menswear show the following Friday. In any event, Joffe's enthusiasm was clearly not shared by his listeners, including a red-haired woman standing in front of me. "Disaster. *Point*," she said, moving on.

WITH his shaved head and distended belly, Alexander McQueen resembles an oversized baby: one has the desire to coddle or spank him, an urge that is amplified by the deliberate naughtiness of his shows. Despite the pressing demands of Givenchy, McQueen still maintains complete artistic control of his own McQueen line in London, where he returned immediately after Paris to prepare for his ready-to-wear fall show. His atelier is in one of a group of factorylike buildings in East London. It contains a very large drafting table, stacked with patterns and fabrics, and a blue sofa, littered with photography books (Nan Goldin's "I'll Be Your Mirror," "Balenciaga," Mary Ellen Mark's "Streetwise"). In the dim light, ordinarily innocent things (a partial portrait of a horse's head, dress mannequins) evoke ominous associations.

On an early weekday evening when I met McQueen there, shortly after the show in Paris, he was still undone by the general air of disappointment surrounding his couture début. He was dressed in a blue turtleneck sweater with stripes across the midriff, bluejeans, white socks, and blue plastic sandals. He slumped into the couch. "I had one month to make everything and embroider it," he explained. His voice had the vaguely adenoidal quality of someone who is perpetually congested. "We've got slammed by quite a few people in Paris, which, in a way, I was more upset about because I didn't have control. If it were my own label, I wouldn't care," he continued. "But it's like I'm working for someone and I can't take an aggressive stand and say, 'Well, I don't give a toss what you think, this is why we did it, this is what



*Fire and smoke on the catwalk and flames appliquéd on snakeskin jacket at Antonio Berardi.*

*Pointy chiffon sleeves poke out from John Rocha's knitted tunic.*

*Fright wigs and slashed collars at Owen Gaster.*



# SHARP!

*Manacle  
bangles and  
punky hairpiece at  
Fabio Piras.*

*McQueen's  
Freddie  
Krueger-  
style hand  
ornaments.*

*Lethal-looking spurs  
attached to Manolo  
Blahnik's suede boots  
for Antonio  
Berardi's show.*

# CUT!

# POINTS!



we think, it was a McQueen collection.'

"All of a sudden, we had these wallies saying, 'This is not couture, this is a lot of bollocks.' But being about couture is trying to find new clients for couture, and it's hard to do that when you have the press saying that this is not for Anne Bass. I mean, I don't want to bloody dress Anne Bass anyway, you know what I mean? Why interview someone I don't want as a client anyway? Interview Courtney Love, or someone. The Courtney Loves, the Madonnas—these are the new customers." He added, "The reason I am doing this is because I am twenty-seven, not fifty-seven."

**M**CQUEEN views his youth as a selling point rather than as a handicap, and certainly twenty-something—thirty-something, maximum—is the requisite age if you want to be considered among the new British fashion designers showing up in the style pages and on the runways in London this season. McQueen has cut a wide swath in British fashion, just as the New York-based designer Stephen Sprouse did ten or fifteen years ago, and a new crop of talent is springing up behind him—mushrooming in low-rent corners of the city, hanging shingles and hiring press agents. This frenzy of entrepreneurial activity has in turn triggered an

international resurgence of commercial interest in Great Britain: Prada, Calvin Klein, and Donna Karan are all expanding their presence on fashion-conscious Bond Street, while foreign investors are scouring the grimy streets of East London for new talent to back. The London fashion scene hasn't been this hip since before most of these new designers were born. ("London? Swinging?" the shoe designer Manolo Blahnik exclaims. "I don't know if it's swinging, darling, but the idea is certainly good for business.")

The thirty-three-year-old designer Fabio Piras explains what he calls "the revolution of London" as having sprung from arduous conditions that young designers were laboring under only a few years earlier. "You had no money," he says. "And a certain synergy grows out of a recession. People said, 'Fuck it, we're going to have a show.' And, of course, the first person from my generation to do that was Alexander McQueen. He was the first person to have the guts to do it, and then everyone else jumped on the bandwagon. British fashion didn't exist anymore at that time. Then these desperadoes—us, the new generation—said, 'Well, we're doing collections, we are doing whatever without money. We'll just do it anyway.'"

Although none of McQueen's contem-

poraries have yet achieved his level of success, eleven designers I saw while I was in London—Ren Pearce and Andrew Fionda, Suzanne Clements and Inacio Ribeiro, Sonja Nuttall, Fabio Piras, Antonio Berardi, Julien MacDonald, Stella McCartney, Owen Gaster, and Hussein Chalayan—constitute a style council of sorts. Together, they establish the parameters of the contemporary British look, which ranges from street gear through deconstructionist whimsy to recycled bits of antique clothing that could have been scrounged at Camden Market.

Sonja Nuttall's design studio, on Barrett Street—three flights up—is a small white rectangle, stark as a hospital room, but made slightly warmer by a free-standing electric heater. Much of Nuttall's clothing—long cotton shifts cut on a bias, boxy linen jackets, light cotton skirts overlaid with organza—is in direct opposition to the stridently youth-obsessed creations of many of her colleagues; she focusses on the needs of adult women who want to look ready rather than rough. Her collections always have an organizing principle or idea, she told me; last season it was Edith Sitwell. All the clothes in Nuttall's first show were black. "The theme was *chiaroscuro*; we wanted to portray this imagery of a beautiful face—complete dark-

ness, then one woman's face would appear, and another one, and another one, and all you would see was floating heads, but in quite a surreal light," she explained. A curtain of golden gauze separates her office—which is, in effect, a long wooden plank, which serves as a desk—from the cutting tables, the sewing machine, and the ironing board. Like virtually all her contemporaries, Nuttall doesn't have a shop; she also doesn't have financial backing, and couldn't have shown her collection this season without the revenue she generated by designing cigar boxes and cigarette cases for a leading English tobacconist. She depends on orders for her clothes which are placed by stores in London or by private customers.

Nuttall spent her high-school years playing soccer



*"Will you be passing a mailbox?"*



## ANOTHER LOSS TO STOP FOR

Against such cold and mercurial mornings,  
watch the wind whirl one leaf  
across the landscape,  
then, in a breath, let it go.  
The color in the opaque sky  
seems almost not to exist.

Put on a wool sweater.  
Wander in the leaves,  
underneath healthy elms.  
Hold your child in your arms.

After the dishes are washed,  
a kiss still warm at your neck,  
put down your pen. Turn out the light.

I know how difficult it is,  
always balancing and weighing,  
it takes years and many transformations;  
and always another loss to stop for,

to send you backwards.

Why do you worry so,  
when none of us is spared?

—JILL BIALOSKY

with the boys and giving sewing lessons. She wanted to be a sewing machinist when she grew up: "I know that's very boring, but that's what I wanted to do. At the age of—what?—twelve or thirteen, I just thought that was the be-all, end-all, to be a sewing machinist, to actually find out all those techniques." After learning the techniques, however, she quickly grew bored. She decided to become a designer.

Nuttall told me things that I was to hear repeatedly during my visit: the perils of success for a tiny enterprise ("We grew too quick, too soon. It was fantastic, it was just unbelievable, everything we showed we sold, right through the range"), the lack of corporate support in Great Britain ("We have to be adventurous. We have to be because there's no money in this industry, unfortunately for us, in this country. Thank God for the French. They've come over and said, 'Hey, let's do something'"), and, finally, the excitement of being in the fashion game ("I am truly in love with what I do, with my art, with my business, with my company").

Like Nuttall, most young British designers seem to take a certain pride in the difficulties of their situation. ("Be

sure to mention our Dickensian surroundings," Andrew Fionda said, laughing, as he ushered me into his company's airless loft.) This cheerful stoicism is just as well, in the face of the larger culture. Piras observed, "Here no one says to us, 'Great, guys, this is what I'm after, you can make it work, you can make lots of money.' There is support up to a certain point, then what the hell and that's it—very London. Finished and on to the next. Very punk. I can't imagine punk coming from Milan."

ANTONIO BERARDI, who is twenty-eight, told me that ever since he was little he had wanted to be noticed. First, he wanted to become an altar boy—"to wear a cassock and follow the procession." Then he wanted to be an actor or a fashion designer. Now he is the darling of a number of stylists, fashion editors, and designers, and has acquired an Italian backer. Even so, his design studio—two flights up, off Charing Cross Road—is even smaller than Nuttall's, and has been made smaller still by a double rack of clothes and by the desk of his business partner—a young Indian man named Priyesh

Shah, who constantly interrupts him.

Berardi's career, which has generated a great deal of press (he has now had four shows), depends in part on his clothes—short-skirted little suits, or foppish silk jackets with big bell sleeves, and knickers cut just above the knee, which recall the early designs of his former employer, John Galiano—and in part on his dark Sicilian looks, his heterosexuality, and his love of house music. (He hopes to produce an album of his favorite cuts.) Photographed in his apartment with his headphones around his neck, or modelling jeans, sneakers, and a T-shirt of his own design in the youth-oriented magazine *i+d*, Berardi is his own best advertisement: the only sexy exotic in the new British ateliers. On the evening we met, a young fashion editor was just leaving his room, her cheeks pink with the flush of flirtation, weighed down by suitcases and clutching a gaudy Berardi creation. She was on her way to her grandmother's funeral but had stopped off at Berardi's first, to pick up a few things for a shoot.

OF the designers I saw, eight majored in fashion at London's Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design. Fabio Piras and Sonja Nuttall teach at the college as well. Galiano is an alumnus. McQueen has said that C.S.M. was "lovely," because one could associate with "people of the same persuasion." Situated in Soho, not far from the Palace Theatre, where "Les Misérables" is having its landmark run, the school is unusually committed to stimulating and nourishing original design, and it draws an international collection of students. Piras told me that the most interesting ones come from countries where there is little interest in fashion: "I have students coming from Turkey, or Croatia—there is somebody from Slovenia at the moment—and I think they're fantastic!"

Since 1990, the number of fashion majors at C.S.M. has risen from two hundred and fifty to five hundred and fifty. And although not all the graduates are guaranteed a show at the end of their studies, there is the lure of being discovered by any number of buyers or editors passing through. Nuttall joked about the heightened sense of self-importance among her students: "They think they're the best thing that's ever happened to British fashion, so you've got to calm them down. Yeah, they look fantastic. Yeah, they know everybody, they've done

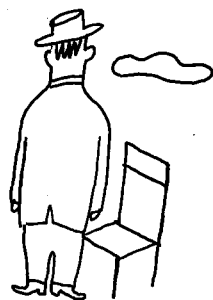


this, they've done that, they hang out, they go to these clubs, and then their work is shite. And you're, like, 'Hello, let's try to get to the visual appeal in your work.' Trying to get the balance is very hard."

C.S.M.'s visionary approach to design is not confined to its classrooms but seems to have permeated various aspects of the culture at large. At times, it is refreshing; at other times, it seems a bit excessive. Owen Gaster's spring/summer 1997 collection, according to his press release, explores the premise that, in a world "where technology reigns, the subversive hunts for nostalgia. Fairytales, clockwork toys, mythological creatures are adopted into cyber-culture as antiques of the future," while Hussein Chalayan takes his inspiration from "personal theories relating to the intangible: performance, anthropology, cultural prejudice, and death." Piras was slightly impatient with all this: "Why should there be a message? What am I, God? I'm interested in making clothes. If you want a message, you write."

LIKE Piras, Stella McCartney is more interested in how clothes look than in what they mean. When I went to her studio, on Talbot Road—on the second floor—I was admitted by her assistant, Phoebe Philo, who seemed more like McCartney's chum than like an employee. Phoebe had white-blond hair cropped short, and wore ski pants that were too short and trainers. "Stella'll be right out—won't you, you old bitch?" she said, laughing, as she ushered me into the studio, which has the light airiness of a tidy girl's dorm room. McCartney's clothes have the same lightness: frocks and midi-length skirts, jackets, and miniature top hats with veils or netting. When McCartney came in, she told me that she tried to keep everything "so English, because I love old-fashioned things about England," and she added, "I am sort of obsessed, basically, with things you can't get anymore. A lot of it is men's clothes, but for women, but not in a dykey way."

McCartney has a round face that looks like a nice bowl of pudding, and her eyes are large and periwinkle blue. Her hair is copper, and she was wearing copper lipstick to match. She waved a rust-brown skirt made of fake suède in front of me. "André Leon Talley came up to see me and I showed him this skirt and he was, like, 'Ooooh,'" McCartney said, shield-



ing her face, imitating the mock horror of *Vanity Fair's* European editor. McCartney, the daughter of Paul and Linda McCartney, says she feels old, but she is only twenty-five. She was hoping to go backpacking after she finished C.S.M., but then she had her graduation show and a Japanese company saw her collection and wanted to buy some of her clothes right away, so she went straight to work.

McCartney, like other C.S.M. graduates I spoke with, said that her education at C.S.M. had been more inspiring than practical. For her first collection, she used as much antique fabric as she could get her hands on. And then she dyed it all. "These were the things that they should have taught you at college not to do for production. I dyed all those a special green, because, at the time, that green was nowhere, and I knew exactly what I wanted. I managed to find it in an antique beaded bag—there was one little green bead on it—and I took it and got the material dyed that color. Then people wanted to buy these clothes, and I had to go buy fabric, but I couldn't dye thousands of metres! And then they wanted all these antique laces, and I was, like, 'You can't have any of the antique laces.'"

Even though McCartney presumably has more financial resources than most of her contemporaries, now, two years after she finished at C.S.M., she is acutely aware of the difficulties of production: "Unless you are a huge company, everything is expensive. The buyers want it really cheap, but you can't give it to them really cheap because their orders aren't big enough and England is very difficult for manufacturing." Even so, her clothes are better made than most, and show more attention to detail. "Well, you see, I love quality. I want everything to be French-seamed; I want the buttons hand-sewn. So my costs are high." She explained further that if she wants to make a profit, or even just pay an assistant, the inevitable markup makes her clothing very expensive. "But if you are somebody, and you are making loads," she continued, "your costs are so much lower. It's difficult."

WHEN it comes to the successful expression of fantasy as fashion, no one in the current spate of London-based designers equals the twenty-four-year-old Julien MacDonald, whose work is an

amalgamation of French sensuality and English perversity. His elfin charm, wide-eyed stare, and propensity for frock coats and good English boots seem oddly out of place in the vast front room of his East End atelier, with its oversized refrigerator and an electric teakettle.

Born in Wales, MacDonald has been Karl Lagerfeld's knitwear designer for a year and a half. (He was hired straight out of London's Royal College of Art, where his work had been spotted by Lagerfeld's assistant, Eric Wright.) This steady employment has enabled him to carry on his own work. Like McCartney, he is obsessed with England's aristocratic past. "Annabel Rothschild, Isabella Blow, Amanda Harlech—the inspiration for my clothes is English lady eccentrics," he told me. Sometimes MacDonald attaches bits of antique clothing—a sleeve from a beaded gown, say—to his exquisitely wrought knitwear. ("It's very secretive how I do it," he says.) As I viewed his debut collection, he explained it to me, in rhapsodic tones. "I put old sleeves on new things because the wearer is then carrying someone else's spirit—and look at this collar," MacDonald said, displaying a bit of lace. "This is the collar of a dress a woman was murdered in. Fantastic! The story of my next show is that there's a little boy who loses his parents. He's sent on a trip with a bad tutor. I don't know what the clothes will look like yet. Anyway, the boy's tutor keeps him belowdecks on a ship—won't let him see the sun. So they go to Capri, and whilst he's in the sea—he's let out in a small boat—he catches a mermaid in the Blue Grotto."

MacDonald, despite his name and connections, seemed wary of his accomplishments, saying, "I don't want to be commercial—not yet."

THE pre-Givenchy McQueen, like his contemporaries in the design world, fought to retain an avant-garde status in a commercial industry, even when he worked as a tailor for Anderson & Shepard, on Savile Row. One famous anecdote about McQueen has it that when he made suits for Gorbachev, Michael Jackson, and Prince Charles he would occasionally scrawl "McQueen Was 'Ere" on the suits' inner linings. Now he is one of the most prominent figures in the Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton empire, which in 1995 had sales of five billion nine hundred million dollars. But, if some of his contemporaries worry that McQueen is



in danger of selling out, it is equally unclear to others what, exactly, he is supposed to be buying into, and why. André Leon Talley was reported in the *New York Times* to have said of Bernard Arnault, the chairman of L.V.M.H., and his choosing McQueen for the job, "The man is most concerned about the media attention. . . . It's about a marketing strategy, making young people who are so radical the couture choices." Talley did not see the appointment as an aesthetic issue: "He could have taken the Princess of Wales as the designer, and he would have been very happy." The subsequent hype around McQueen may have been almost exclusively Arnault's brainchild—and may be, as fashion columnist Amy Spindler suggested in the *Times*, less about what McQueen and Galliano could bring to couture than about how their media savvy could eclipse the prodigious Karl Lagerfeld.

One late evening at the Café Bohème, in Soho, I discussed McQueen's success with Claude Grunitzky, the editor of *Trace*, which is one of Britain's more interesting cultural publications, and with Akure Wall, a former fashion model, whose debut album will be released this spring. Grunitzky was born in Togo; Wall's mother is Nigerian. Both are astute critics of the London scene, not least because both consider themselves, as blacks, somewhat outside it. (The British fashion world, like its American counterpart, is integrated less by black fashion editors and designers with clout than by black models with clout.)

"I don't think the fashion editors are looking at McQueen's work," Grunitzky said. "They're looking at *him*. I think they like his personality so much they would do anything to see him succeed, regardless of whether the show was terrible in Paris. Londoners are really self-consumed when it comes to fashion, because they haven't figured out what they really like. When they do recognize that they like a certain designer, everybody rallies behind him, but only for one season. They are talking about John Galliano and McQueen today, but next week it will be someone else. The shock value is always more important to them than the aesthetics of what is being created."

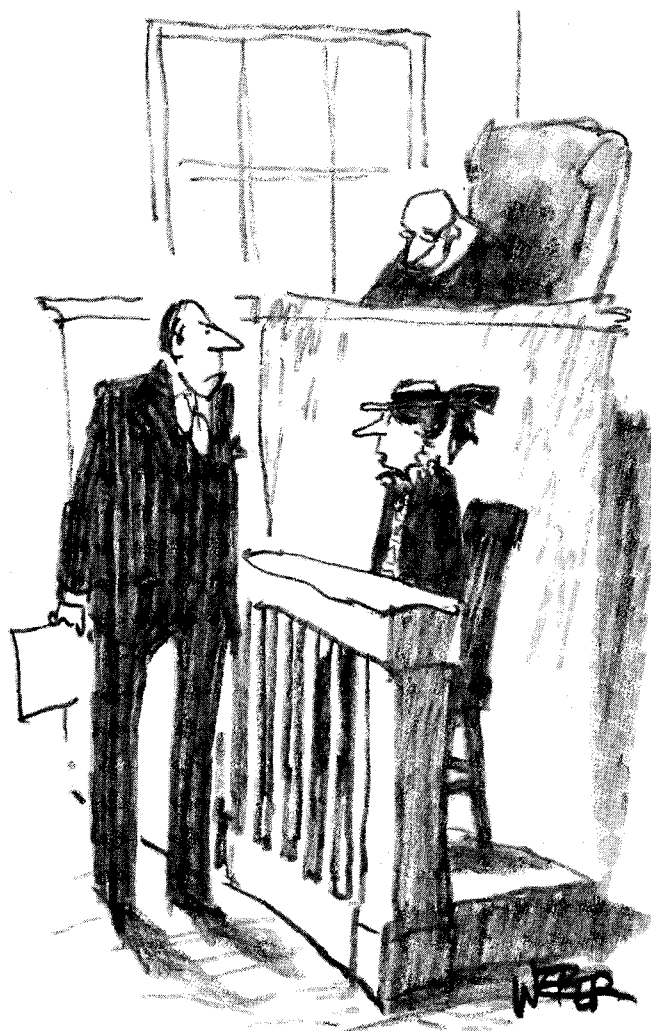
Wall added, "McQueen is coming from this real working-class, man-of-the-people background, but with a completely eccentric vision, and people are feeding off that in a huge way, because it ties in with the

whole 'lad' culture. A gay lad? He's perfect!"

McQueen is aware of the ways in which his image and "notorious" credibility have been used by Givenchy, and is equally aware that his association with the house carries with it certain responsibilities and constraints. He feels guilty that the superhuman efforts exerted by the house staff ("They're the ones who sat there all night sewing") were not rewarded with higher praise. And he regrets that he isn't free simply to brush off his negative reviews. "I could walk out of the place if it were my own collection and say, 'Well, if you didn't get it, you weren't supposed to get it,'" he told me. "You shouldn't have that point of view when you're dealing with a large house with lots of money and you know the perfume sells and the licensing sells and it's all purely about promotion." He is also aware, perhaps now more than ever, of the importance of remaining attuned to a street sensibility. "The McQueen line is always a London thing," he explains.

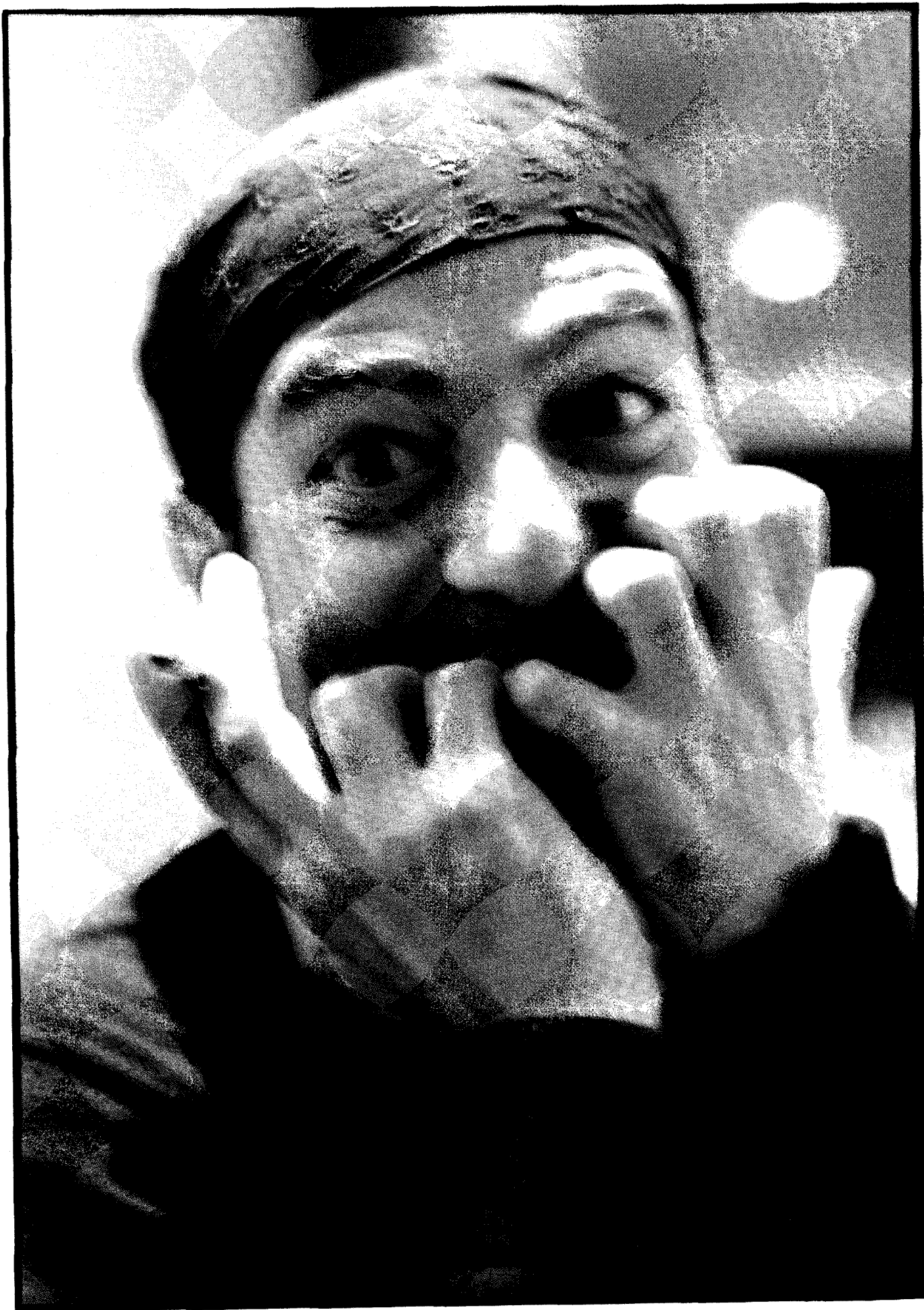
"What's happening around me and Givenchy is not about a London thing, it's not about what's happening now. It's just about life style or luxury. I would never even think of using white and gold for my own collection. It was purely out of respect for the house's logo." Speaking of Galliano's coöptation by the French couture world, he says, "It's a kind of dangerous situation with John, because John is totally Frenchified now. I am working in France with my hands while my legs are on the beat in London. I would never release myself from London, the way John has. I can't, because this is where my inspiration comes from, this is where my life is."

And yet, even at the height of his power and notoriety, McQueen remains the practical boy from the East End, whose father drove a cab. "You can get really deep about it, but I don't see fashion as curing cancer or AIDS—or anything else, for that matter. At the end of the day, they are just clothes." ♦



"I'll tell you why I shot him if you promise you won't laugh."





*The British couturier John Galliano, in only his third month as Dior's head designer, the night before the show.*





PARIS PORTFOLIO  
**BACKSTAGE**

*A photographer captures the  
ateliers, dressing rooms, and showroom  
suites of this winter's fashion shows.*

BY FRANÇOIS-MARIE BANIER

*Galliano creations at the Grand Hôtel.*





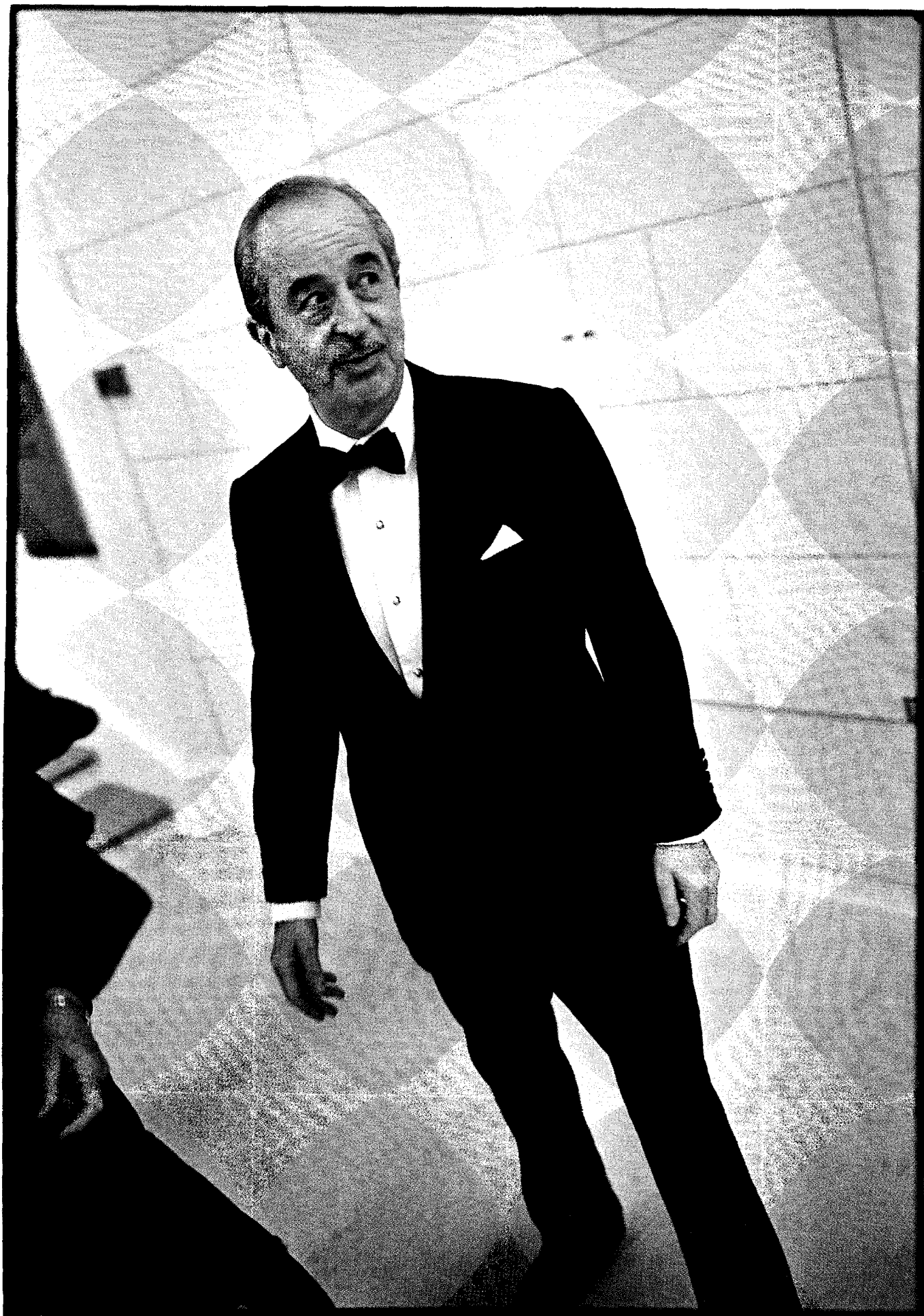
*Seats for the couture shows are always reserved; a maker of silk flowers, who has already found his place, greets three milli*





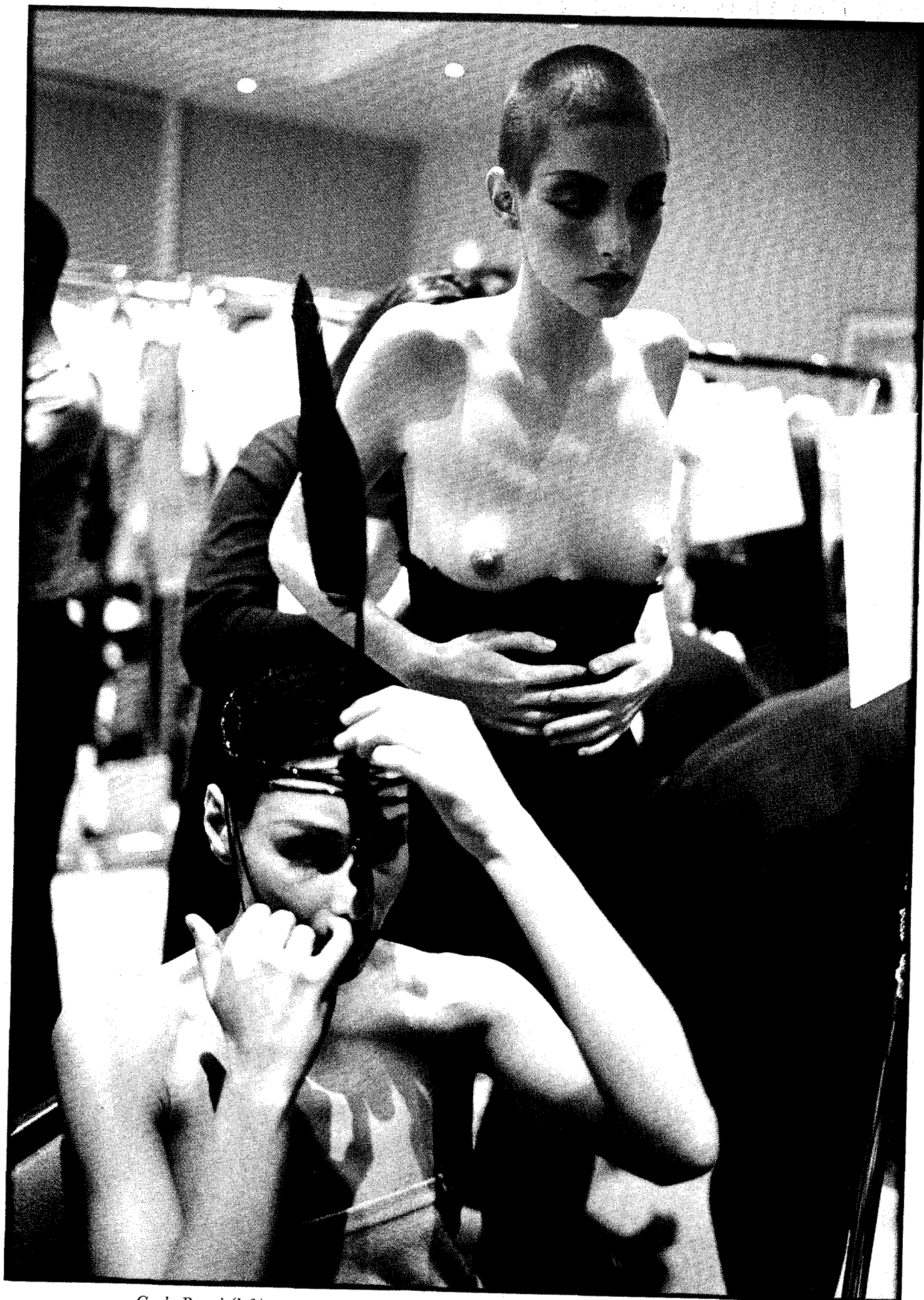
*is acquaintance as they hunt for theirs, in preparation for the Chanel show, in the opulent Windsor Suite, at the Hôtel Ritz.*





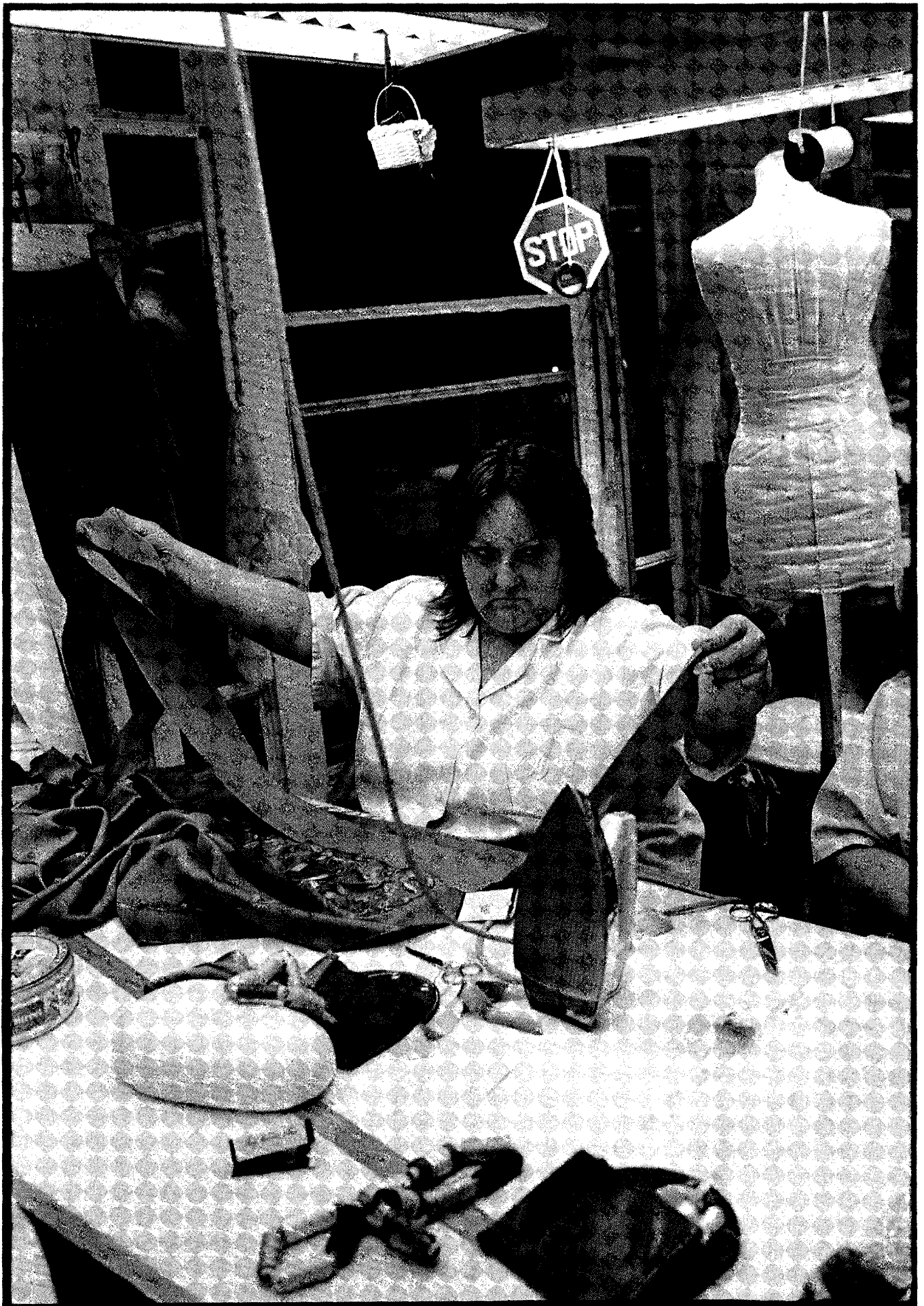
*Former Prime Minister Édouard Balladur arrives at the opening fête, at the Musée de la Mode et du Costume.*





*Carla Bruni (left) and Carrie Salmon preparing to model the Galliano collection for Dior.*





*Sylvie Bourderon, a seamstress, making midnight alterations at the Dior studio.*





*The fashion muse Lady Amanda Harlech and her new employer, Karl Lagerfeld, at the Chanel party at the Ritz.*





*The scene at the Plaza Athénée on the night after the Dior show.*





*Wrapped Gallianos, ready to return to the atelier.*

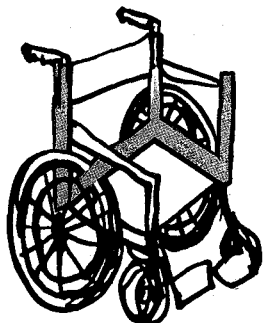


## FICTION

## WHOSOEVER

*The language of mothers and sons.*

BY RICK MOODY



HOSOEVER knows the folds and complexities of his own mother's body, *he shall never die.* Whosoever knows the lati-

tudes of his mother's body, whosoever has taken her into his arms and immersed her baptismally in the first-floor tub, lifting one of her alabaster legs and then the other over its lip, whosoever has bathed her with Woolworth's soaps in sample sizes, twisted the creaky taps and tested the water on the inside of his wrist, and shovelled a couple of tablespoons of rose bath salts under the billowing faucet, marvelling at their vermillion color, who has bent by hand her sclerotic limbs, as if reassuring himself about the condition of a hinge, and has kissed her on the part that separates the lobes of her white hair, cooed her name while soaping underneath the breast where he was once fed, breathed the acrid and dispiriting stench of her body while scrubbing the greater part of this smell away, pushed her discarded bra and oversized panties (scattered on the tile floor behind him) to one side, away from the water sloshing occasionally over the edge of the tub and choking the runoff drain, who has wiped stalactites of drool from her mouth with a moistened violet washcloth, swept back the annoying violet shower curtain in order to lift up his stick-figure mother and bathe her ass, where a sweet and infantile shit sometimes collects, causing her both discomfort and shame, who has angrily manhandled the dial on the bathroom radio (balanced on the toilet tank) with one wet hand in an effort to find a college station that blasts only compact-disk recordings of train accidents and large-scale construction operations, selecting at last the drummers

of Burundi on WUCN knowing full well that his mother can brook only the music of Tin Pan Alley and certain classics, and who has then reacted guiltily at his own selfishness and tuned to some "lite" AM station featuring the greatest hits of swing, whosoever has noticed in the course of his mission the ripe light of early November as it is played out on the bathroom wall where one of those plug-in electric candles with plastic base is the only source of illumination, and has waited in this half-light while his mother takes her last bodily pleasure—her useless body floating in the warm, humid, even lapping of rose-scented bathwater, a water which in spite of its pleasures occasionally causes transient scotoma, ataxia, difficulty swallowing, deafness, and other temporary dysfunctions consistent with her ailment—who has looked nonetheless at his pacific mom's face in that water and known, in a New Age kind of way, the face he had before he was born, and who has wept over his mother's condition while bathing her, silently weeping, without words or expressions of pity or any nose-blowing or -honking, just weeping for a second like a ninny, and who has thereafter recovered quickly and forcefully from despair, formulating a simple gratitude for the fact that *he still has a mother*, but who has nonetheless wondered at the kind of astral justice that has immobilized her thus, whosoever has then wished that the bath was over already so that he could go and drink too much at a local bar, a bar where he will encounter the citizens of this his *home town*, a bar where he will see his cronies from high school, those who never left, those who have stayed to become civic boosters, those who have sent kids to the same day school they themselves attended thirty years before, who has looked at his watch and yawned, while wondering how long he has to let his

mother soak, who soaped his mother a second time, to be sure that every cranny is disinfected, that every particle of dirt, every speck of grime, is eliminated, who stepped into a draining tub to hoist his mother from it, as if he were hoisting a drenched parachute from a streambed, who has balanced her on the closed toilet seat so that he might dry her with a towel of decadent thickness (purple), who has sniffed, lightly, undetectably, the surface of her skin as he dries her, who has refused to put his mother's spectacles on her face just now, as he has in the past when conscripted into bathing her, as he ought to do now, though in all likelihood she can only make out a few blurry shapes anyway (at least until the cooling of her insulted central nervous system), who has wished to prolong this additional disability, however, because when she is totally blind in addition to being damn near quadriplegic she faces up to the fact that her orienting skills are minimal, whosoever has slipped his mother's undergarment about her legs and checked along the way the dainty hairless passage into her vulva one more time, because he can't resist the opportunity here for *knowledge*, who has gagged briefly at his own forwardness, who has strapped his mother's bra onto her and slipped a housedress over her head, getting first one arm and then the other tangled in the neck hole, who has reached for and then pulled the plug on the radio because the song playing on it is too sad, some terribly sad jazz ballad with muted trumpet, who has put slippers on his mother's feet, left and then right, fiddling with her toes briefly first, simply to see if there is any sensation there, because her wasting disease is characterized by periods in which *some* feeling or sensation suddenly returns to affected extremities (though never all sensation), and likewise periods in which sensation



is precipitously *snuffed out*, who has noted the complete lack of response in his mother when he pinches her big toe, and who has noted this response calmly, who has now finally set his mother's glasses on her nose and adjusted the stems to make sure they are settled comfortably on her ears, who has kissed her a second time where her disordered hair is thinnest, who has taken her now fully into his arms to carry her to the wheelchair in the doorway, whosoever has said to his wasting mom while stuttering mildly out of generalized anxiety and because of insufficient pause for the inflow and outflow of breath, *Hey, Mom, you look p-p-p-p-pretty fabulous t-t-tonight, you look like a million b-b-bucks*, who has said this while unlocking the brake on the chair, then bringing the chair to a stop in the corridor off the kitchen, beneath a cheap, imitation American Impressionist landscape that hangs in that hallway, just so that he can hug his mom one more time because he hasn't seen her in months, because he is a neglectful son, because her condition is worse, always worse, who has fantasized nonetheless about lashing her chair to a television table on casters so that he can just roll her and the idiot box with its barbiturate programming around the house without having to talk to her because he's been watching this decline for two decades or more and *he's fed up with comforting and self-sacrifice, the very ideas make him sick*, whosoever has settled her in the kitchen by the Formica table and opened the refrigerator looking for some mush that will do the job and on which she will not spend the whole night choking as she sometimes does, so that he then has to use that little medical vacuum-cleaner thing, that dental tool, to remove saliva and food particles from her gullet, tiny degraded hunks of minestrone and baby food, who has tripped briefly over his mother's chair trying to get around it on the way to the chocolate milk in the fridge and jammed his toe, *Shit, shit, shit, sorry, Ma*, who has then changed his mind and fetched therein a six-pack of the finest imported beer purchased earlier at the convenience store in town, and popped open one can for himself and one for his mother, who has then carried the beer to his mother and fitted the end of the straw between her lips, exhorting

her to *drink, drink*, while emptying his own fine imported beer in a pair of swallows so that he might move on to the next, who has then hugged his mom (again) feeling, in the flush of processed barley and hops, that his life is withal the best of lives, full of threat and bounty, bad news and good, affluence and penury, the sacred and the profane, the masculine and the feminine, whosoever has, in this instant of sorrow and reverence, *learned the answers* to why roses bloom, why wineglasses sing, why human lips, when kissed, are so soft, and why parents suffer, *he shall never die*.

HIS mother's voice, as she hears it now, as she hears herself through the dense matter of her physique, *Hey there, cut it out*, as the beer pours from her mouth and down a dish-towel bib and through the bib to the front of her housedress, soaking through its drab beige design, *Hey!*, her voice is faint and inscrutable, she knows, in the autumn of these neuropathogens, full of mumblings and susurrings, imprecisions, nonsense, phonemic accidents, nonsyntactic vocalizations, unfinished thoughts and sentences; her voice is delivered at an improbably slow velocity, and with evident exertion. She knows. She sends no message but pathos. Her son doesn't understand, for example, that the can of imported beer, mostly emptied upon her now, and trickling along the linoleum floor toward one baseboard, is of no interest to her; her son doesn't understand that she doesn't care for beer any longer, as she never much did, feeling that beer is the beverage of the disadvantaged, not at all the choice *in her day*. The straw falls from her pursed lips, topples out of the can, and cartwheels across her lap, before splashing to rest in the beer pooling by the side of her chair. Her son doesn't understand. He glares at her and carries the empty to a to-be-recycled carton of reinforced cardboard by the back door, and begins again to rummage in the refrigerator. The reason she has summoned him here, having sent home the nurse, Aviva, for the weekend, is among the sentences so far not fully expressed. She is aware of this—as her son, nervously trying to excise a hangnail with his teeth (*Don't hang on the door of the refrigerator, please*, she wants

to say), slams the door of same and then lurches out of the kitchen, returning with a bottle of bourbon from the bar in the pantry. Her son tries to anticipate her needs, to preempt her need for words, to eliminate a language based on need, and thus *to eliminate language* (and with it this drama of anguished communication). He reformulates all the conversation into simple yeas or nays. *You d-d-don't want the beer? Are you comfortable? Are you warm enough? D-do you want another light on? Kind of d-dark in here, M-m-mom, isn't it? Do you need to be changed? The nurse t-take you out today?* However, even this simple, binary information system is faulty and replete with misunderstandings. Because her replies, mere probabilities of meaning when you get right down to it, are mostly formulated through *microgesticulations*, a semantics of the faintly conveyed message—the half-closed eyelid, the pressing together of chapped or drooling lips, the head cocked slightly to one side, or the epiglottal choking sound—those communications still permitted by the encrusted linkages of her nerves. This is the foundation of her language now, she is well aware, and therefore it's *the language of mothers and sons*, the language of love between the generations, anyway; all recollections, beseechments, expressions of tenderness, along with her more mundane requests and importunities, must begin with this semantics of gesticulation. Which is to say that speech, for her, is soon going to be a thing of the past. The speech act will follow, into the gloaming, her handwriting, her perfumed thank-you notes, her love letters, her journal entries, her business letters, even her signature, that florid and legally binding evidence of self. Her speech will vanish as these things have vanished. But as her son spoons a few ounces of applesauce into a teacup for her, *My God, applesauce is tedious beyond belief*, the constraint of silence is more than she can bear, suddenly, she just can't relax, and from inside her she tries each muscle, each of her smallest appendages, the knuckle of a toe whose nail had once been painted lavender, a fingertip that once tickled the ivories. In the lockbox where she is located, she focusses all remaining intention on her arm, thinking, feeling, *Dear, there's something I need to tell you. Could*



*you please settle down for just a minute so that I can explain something to you? Could you please stay clearheaded long enough to have a conversation? There is something troubling I need to ask of you.* She feels this arm moving, she's sure of it, but when she looks (through trifocal lenses) she can see that it is stationary, this arm is stationary in her lap, white downy fuzz upon alabaster flesh, this flesh wrapped haphazardly, loosely upon the ulna. No muscle to speak of. She tries to reach for him, for her son, but the arm, like the other, sits in her lap, left hand holding the spastic right. The left side of her, where all the remaining movement has been warehoused, can still travel a couple of centimetres to and fro, maybe an inch, but it seems today, when she really needs it, to drowse and idle. When she catches her next head cold or cold sore or is bitten by her next mosquito this mobility will—if the past is any guide—abandon her as it has elsewhere. That's how the disease works. (Here her son sneezes ominously and then looks distractedly around him for a tissue, a strand of mucus yo-yoing from his nose. He staggers to a dish towel, head tilted back, scours his upper lip, and then returns to the applesauce.) Her exertion, though, and the transient paralysis caused by the bath, leave her exhausted, too tired, and she doesn't know if she will be able to get tongue and teeth and breath around the simple magic of a few consonants and vowels. The alphabet is all hairpin turns and pyrotechnical displays. She thinks if there is in her no evidence of any perceptible language, who is to blame for that? If perception is required for language, well, then, it's a pretty faulty design. Inside her, language dances on. As does memory. What a rich store of memories she has, outside of what might be heard or seen—as her son fixes himself a drink. What a dance of feelings at the sound of the ice hitting the bottom of the tumbler again. Her son is like his father, as so many sons are, she thinks, and this association leads her astray, this association collides with the present and then darts off parallel, and she follows the past, as she is free to do, until suddenly she comes up short two years ago. *To when they gave her a gift.* Her son and her second husband. It was Christmastime, and they had given her

the gift, bought her a notebook-style computer, Dell Corporation with PMCLA Type II slot and Yamaha YM262 twenty-voice synthesizer and Media Vision pro audio studio, as her husband had described it, *to be bundled with the popular HandiSpeak software*, mostly portable, mostly wireless, a new prototype, a wireless technology, so that the notebook could sit on top of the tray table on her chair and broadcast a message back to the desktop system (situated on her antique rolltop). What did the facsimile voice sound like? The voice of HandiSpeak? The three of them, she remembers, in the tableau around the Christmas tree in the drafty, poorly lit living room, ceilings too high, tree overdecorated, overtinselled (by her son), the three of them, pulling the ribbons from *the gift*, well, the men pulling the ribbons from it, herself simply watching, heavy cables and obscure plugs and cords snaking out from under hastily and poorly folded wrapping paper, little seraphic elves dancing on a purple field, pine needles and stray tinsel strands dusting the surface of black and gray plastic casing as they dusted all the surfaces in the living room. They looked at her for approval, and because back then, two years ago, she still had a little bit of a nod left, *she nodded noncommittally*, and her husband goaded on her son as if he were still a boy and not in his middle thirties, *Go ahead, boot it up*, and he did as he was told, turned on the monitor, shreds of plastic tape still affixed to it like sutures, all the gleaming red operating lamps illuminated, and there was the Windows desktop, appearing on the monitor like a reassuring first gasp from an infant, and then the HandiSpeak pointer, with its stylized index finger and rolled-up sleeve. Before them, on the screen (they rolled her closer so that she could see), in an ornate computer font—Garamond Antiqua—were the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet, as perfect and simple as atoms must have seemed when Democritus (she thought) imagined them, those simple little squiggles of which arguments were formed, those squiggles that divided houses and united them, that were arranged into the words intoned over baptisms and deaths. Those letters taken from her by her illness. Her son used

the mouse apparatus, the ergonomically designed joystick requiring an absolute minimum of mobility on the part of its hapless user, and clicked on the alpha of the HandiSpeak alphabet:

a aback abandon abase abate abbreviate abdicate abdomen abduct aberrant abet abhor ability abject ablaze able abnegate abnormal aboard abode abolish A-bomb abominate abort about above abrasion abscess abscond absent absolute abstain abstract absurd abuse abusive abysmal accelerate accent accept acceptance access accessible accident accommodate accost accretion accrue accumulate accurate accused accuse ace ache achieve acid acknowledge acme acorn acoustic acquisition acquit acre acrimony acronym across act action activate active actor actual actuary acute adagio Adam adamant adapt add addict address adequate adhere adjective adjoin adjourn adjunct adjust ad-lib administer admiral admire admit admonish adolescent adore adorn adornment adrenaline adulterate adult adulterate adultery advance adventure

This forest of "A" words beautiful and strange as he scrolled through them. Words *were* civilization! And as she gazed on them, on her lost society (though it was obvious that the HandiSpeak's vo-

## SPACE

*Richard Phillips uses images from the fashion-related media of the sixties and seventies for inspiration, but that's where his post-modernism ends. The thirty-four-year-old painter renders his portraits of limpid-eyed women in fine oil pigments on coarse linen, in a time-consuming process of priming, toning, and underpainting, finished off with what he thinks of as a performance: a "rapid, wet-on-wet full-color explosion." The measurements of this serene, transfixing beauty—one of several Phillips paintings that will be included in the Whitney Biennial, which opens March 20th—are seven feet by five. Each of her eyes (including the insistent orange under the brow) is the size of a human head. The wide-angle-photography effect bends the image at its edges and makes the title, "Alien," a natural. The aim, Phillips says, is not to juxtapose subject and ground but to "create a vibration between picture and viewer."*

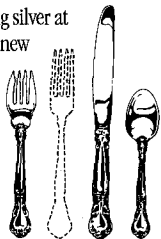






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"I think he's getting serious. Last night he turned off his beeper."

cabulary had been culled from one of those inferior college dictionaries), she was, of course, *speechless*. Her son eased the joystick through the list, looking for *le mot juste*, the perfect arrangement of euphony and content, and he settled finally on one, designating with the pointer the word "adore." Then he selected the edit menu and designated *Go*.

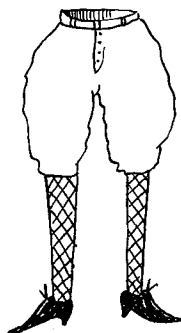
*Adore*, the Yamaha YM262 twenty-voice synthesizer's *disembodied woman's voice* called out from the pile of space junk and wrapping paper on the Oriental carpet in the living room; the self-assured and yet clinical voice sang out, as though there were a fourth person in the room, an unexpected, overstaying holiday guest. The voice, as she recollected it,

was like nothing so much as the voice of *science*, the voice of technological advancement, the voice of lasers and digits and particle colliders, of ultra-high-frequency transmissions. A woman's voice as men would design it. There was a perfume in the room of dying pine. A rich smell. And there was candlelight. An intimate little fire in the fireplace. And then there was this voice. The men circled around her trying to gauge her response. They were expectant. Her son knelt by the computer and clicked on *Return* twice more: *adore, adore*. The enormity of the machinery was apparent to her at last, what science could manage, which, in her case, amounted to using fifty pounds of microchips and motherboards and plastic chassis to enable her to croak out



a few meagre remarks in a prefabricated woman's voice, not her own voice at all, which had been rich and full, with vigorous laughter, ample melody—*her voice was gone*. She had been a talker. She had been able to put the awkward at ease; she had been able to comfort children; she had been able to sweet-talk truculent shopkeepers. But her voice was gone, was consigned now to the netherworld of widowed socks and earrings. She began to cry, in the living room, and her tears were of the specifically disabled sort. They came without pounding of fists or oaths, they simply fell, like summer drizzle, no sound accompanying them, just their erratic progress along her cheeks. *We tried to make sure it was a woman's voice*, her son said, tripping over a coil of patch cords as he made his way to her side, and then her husband said, *Honey, you have to make an effort, you can't just let this happen the way you're doing; we love you, but you have to make an effort. This will help you hang on to your independence, don't you see? Don't you want that? Don't you want to be able to get around in daily life? I know you do. We know you do. We were thinking about you, honey; we want the best for you, and we got the best, top of the line, the most advanced model. Just give it a try. And her son said, If it was up to me, Ma, I would have gotten you an Urdu voice, or a Tibeto-Burman voice,*

*or something, but you can add extra voices, Ma, just the way you can add extra typefaces for your computer. We got an upgrade kit, right there with the software. But it wasn't the woman's voice—that husky, dental assistant's voice—that put another nail in her pine box. That was just the perceptible part of it. The relentless predictability of disabling traumas was beyond words, stretched out around her, fore and aft, hemming her in. So why speak at all? I will not, she said, I will not use it. I will not. And those words were properly transmitted. Her husband and her son, they heard her, though they didn't want to. It put a damper on the rest of Christmas Day. When Aviva, the nurse, tried to feed her, at the dining-room table—a morsel of goose speared on the end of a tine—she kept her mouth clamped shut. Like an unruly brat. And since then the gift had sat unused, its backlit, active-matrix*



screen blinking, waiting for the moment when the affections and recollections of her life would be gobbled by it and converted into the ones and zeroes of a sixteen-bit sound card. Well, as time passed, she did use it occasionally, grudgingly. There was the telephone message. She always wondered why people didn't hang up on it: *Hello, I am temporarily unable to speak with you. My assistant is available, however, if you would care to call again in the early afternoon. Have a wonderful day.* But mostly it was unused, her doppelgänger, though the household current continued to circulate through it. Mostly, her double was silent—that is, until yesterday. Thursday. Which was when Aviva wheeled her up to her desk, and helped her work out the text of her telephone call. She was summoning her boy. Her middle-aged son. Her only child. The son now raising the stainless-steel tablespoon of applesauce toward her mouth, tugging down her chin with one hand, his face close to hers now, the broken blood vessels like a contour map around his nose and under his eyes, his head shorn of all but a faint shadow of his rich chestnut hair, his chin, disgracefully unshaven, with its mix of strawberry-blond and gray hairs, his awkward eyeglasses, from the nineteen-fifties (she guesses), his bloodshot eyes, oh, what has happened to him! How has

he begun so suddenly to grow older? When he speaks at last, when he emerges from distraction to notice her and to see in certain gesticulations the fact that an urgency is upon her now, *What is it, Ma? What's wrong? Is there something you want to say?*, when he presses his probably unwashed ear, clotted with earwax, presses it close to her lips, close enough to graze her lips, then she begins to feel the reservoir of panic in her, the panic that is like a second inhabitant in this loose garment body, the panic that is never distant, the panic she mostly manages to put aside, but which is now swelling in her like a miraculous pregnancy, *Oh darling*, she says to her son, whispering the words as best she can, a minute elapsing before she can complete the thought, in the stillness of the kitchen, at the beginning of night, with autumn announcing winter, *your mother is in a marvellously big parcel of trouble. I am alone.* ♦

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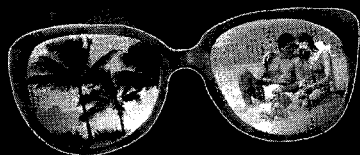
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## BOOKS

# THE COLD WAR AND THE CLOSET

*The true legacy of Whittaker Chambers.*

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

**B**Y the time Alger Hiss died, last November, at the age of ninety-two, his chief accuser, Whittaker Chambers, had been dead for thirty-five years. The case that made them both famous has kept an aura of mystery, but the focus of the mystery is no longer whether, as Chambers charged in 1948, Hiss was a Communist and a spy during the nineteen-thirties. On that question, the room for reasonable doubt continues to shrink. What remains elusive—and continues to fascinate, even as the Cold War recedes into history—is the question of what motivated the drama's principal characters, and especially its lonely and tormented witness.

"I had two compartments," Chambers told the young Representative Richard M. Nixon, the most energetic member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. "Whittaker Chambers on the one side, which is my more or less private compartment, and Carl"—one of Chambers' many aliases. Sam Tanenhaus's "Whittaker Chambers" (Random House; \$35) is an ambitious and diligent attempt to provide a sympathetic portrait of Chambers. Yet this seemingly exhaustive biography misses an opportunity to place the compartments of Chambers' life in a coherent whole. Chambers was engaged in a double rebellion: his behavior as a spy—furtive exchanges, secret signals, false identities—mirrored his behavior as a homosexual. Virtually all previous literature on the Hiss-Chambers case antedates the emergence of a serious historiography of gay life in America. That scholarship was available to Tanenhaus, but he drew on none of it, and has made no effort to explain how Chambers' homosexuality informed his Communism or his conservatism. That context is crucial to un-

derstanding both Chambers and the evolution of Cold War conservatism. A key to the story is that Whittaker Chambers lived in a time when it was easier to confess to being a spy than to confess to being a homosexual.

When, in April of 1939, Chambers turned up at *Time* looking for a job, he struck the patrician T. S. Matthews, the magazine's gatekeeper, as having "an air of suppressed melodrama about him." Henry Luce was Chambers' first steady employer after Joseph Stalin. In his previous job, Chambers had been an espionage agent for the Fourth Department of the Soviet military; he had spent six years, Tanenhaus writes, "without a fixed identity, lived at a total of twenty-one different addresses, had signed false names to leases, passports, and checks, had invented aliases for his wife and children, had paid no income tax." Stout and shambling, a pipe always clamped between the brown stumps of his teeth, he was a solitary figure among *Time's* convivial editors. He rarely came out of his office at first, avoiding even the men's room. After repeated attempts, a colleague in the book department finally persuaded Chambers to join him for lunch. Chambers led him into the subway, got off at Macy's, wended his way through crowds of shoppers on four different floors, exited, and walked to and fro on Thirty-fourth Street before ducking into a restaurant in the Empire State Building, where the two men ate in silence. Several days later, Chambers explained that he had feared he was being set up for an ambush by the Soviet secret police, and opened his jacket to reveal a pistol.

Whittaker Chambers was at once hysterical and phlegmatic, lugubrious and facile, paranoid and erudite. If he



were to be played by an actor of his day, it would be the deliberate Sydney Greenstreet inhabited by the frantic, hunted spirit of Peter Lorre. The drama of the Hiss case revolved around the idea that Chambers' secret life was the door to the nation's political secrets. He told reporters covering the Hiss trial, "I am . . . destroying myself so that this nation and the faith by which it lives may continue to exist," thereby casting himself as a Cold War Christ.

He was a political icon who provided the platform for Nixon's rise, served as reassuring wise man to William F. Buckley, Jr., in the formation of a new conservative intellectual elite, and helped inspire Ronald Reagan in the shaping of a triumphant conservative politics. But while Chambers was an extraordinary self-dramatizer, his motives remain murky. Hiss's defenders were reduced to citing a novel, Franz Werfel's "Class Reunion," about a jealous boy who destroys a schoolmate by fabricating evidence against him. The fact that Chambers had translated the book from the German was meant to be proof of intent.

**C**HAMBERS, born Jay Vivian Chambers in 1901, was named for his father, a graphic illustrator at the New York *World*. His mother, née Laha Whittaker, whose name he took when he went to college, had been a stock-company actress; she was smothering, hysterical, and invasive. His father was remote and distant when he bothered to appear at the family's suburban home, in Lynbrook, Long Island. At one point, he vanished for more than a year into New York City, where he pursued a life in a thriving gay subculture that George Chauncey, a University of Chicago historian, brilliantly described in a 1994 book, "Gay New York":

In the half-century between 1890 and the beginning of the Second World War, a

highly visible, remarkably complex, and continually changing gay male world took shape in New York City. That world included several gay neighborhood enclaves, widely publicized dances and other social events, and a host of commercial establishments where gay men gathered, ranging from saloons, speakeasies, and bars to cheap cafeterias and elegant restaurants. The men who participated in that world



*Chambers on his way to testify against Alger Hiss in 1949.*

forged a distinctive culture with its own language and customs, its own traditions and folk histories, its own heroes and heroines.

As a teen-ager, it seems, Chambers came to understand his father's sexuality and to realize that he lived in "separate compartments." The father disrupted the family and plunged it into financial and emotional distress, but Chambers later expressed admiration for him as "an artist," indifferent to "middle-class standards of comfort."

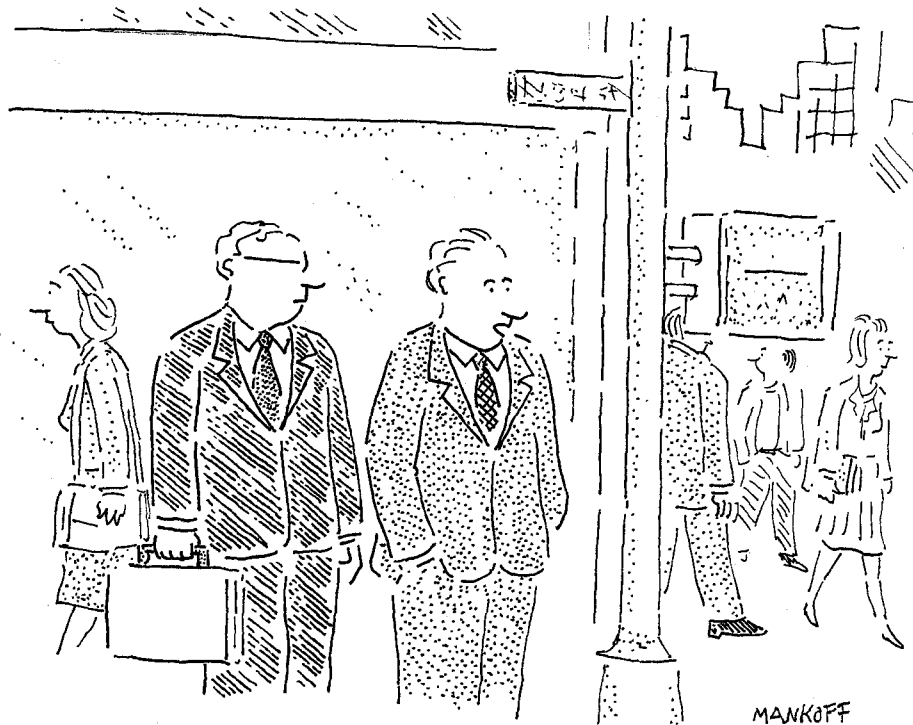
In high school, Vivian, as Chambers was known, was a studious isolate, who grew his hair long and did not bathe. His nicknames were as telling as they were wounding: *Girlie*, *Stinky*, and *Mr. Chamber Pot*. After graduating, in 1919, he left home, joined a construction crew in Washington, and drifted to New Orleans, where he ran out of money. It may have been in the demimonde of the French Quarter that Chambers had his early homosexual episodes, but there is no way of knowing. Chauncey does point out that at that time some men who became transient laborers, seamen, or hoboes did so because of their homosexuality.

Returning home, Chambers gained admission to Columbia College, where his literary talent was discovered by his teacher Mark Van Doren. Chambers' political involvement was apparently restricted to being the most ardent campus campaigner for Calvin Coolidge. But his interest in both Coolidge and college waned. He began to skip classes and exams, dropped out twice, and never graduated. In 1925, inspired by a tract of Lenin's that he found in a secondhand bookstore, he joined the Communist Party.

The Party was then a sect with fewer than fifteen thousand members, most of them foreign-born. Chambers' decision to join the Communists came after "brooding over my family, which seemed

to represent in miniature the whole crisis of the middle class." To his younger brother, Richard, he confided, "The Communists have found a way out." Richard, an alcoholic, tried to get Whittaker to join him in a suicide pact instead. A year and a half later, Richard killed himself. Chambers, at the start of his life as a Communist, wrote a stream of stories and poems with homosexual themes and imagery. One poem, "Tandaradei," read, "As your sap drains out into me in ex-





MANKOFF

"Oh, I guess I'll remarry someday. But first I've got to demarry."

cess, / Like the sap from the stems of a tree that they lop."

In the small, self-enclosed world of the Party, Chambers quickly found a job at the *Daily Worker*. (On the side, to earn some money, he made a lasting contribution to American popular culture by translating an Austrian children's book, "Bambi.") By 1932, he had married Esther Shemitz, a Russian-born Communist activist of unfailing devotion to him, and had risen to become the editor of the Party's literary magazine, *The New Masses*. With the deepening of the Great Depression, the Communists gained strength. Chambers, at the very moment of achieving the exalted station of an American literary commissar, was ordered to become an espionage agent for the Soviet Union. He was responsible to a secret hierarchy, which (barely) subsidized his clandestine lives. He moved his wife around in constantly shifting households, finally settling her and their two children on a farm without electricity or running water in the Maryland countryside, while he was absent on missions for long periods.

Chambers the spy ranged along the Eastern Seaboard. Of all the major

cities, Washington may have had the smallest concentration of Communists, since it had no industry besides government, but there, under a variety of aliases, Chambers coaxed government clerks to steal documents. His Party cell targeted the Department of Agriculture, and his biggest hauls apparently had to do with New Deal farm programs. (Evidently, the Kremlin chose to make little use of the material.) There were few security precautions; visitors could wander unescorted through the offices of the State Department.

Chambers later told the F.B.I. that in this period he was "footloose and fancy free," and confided that his homosexuality was "almost impossible to control." He described how he cruised for sex in parks, often ending up with anonymous partners in "flea-bag" hotels. With his family compartmentalized in the country, he roamed the cities as his father's son.

In 1937, Chambers read a transcribed account of one of the Moscow purge trials and became frightened. Soon a number of his underground contacts were summoned to Moscow, and disappeared in Stalin's purges. He slipped away from the Party the following year, and went into hiding.

He reëmerged, as a translator at a New York publishing house, but he remained convinced that Soviet agents were pursuing him. Recommended by a writer at *Time*, in early 1939 he made his way to the magazine.

At *Time*, Chambers worked long hours and was quick with his editing. Luce believed that he had a deep grasp of history, and, in 1944, made him editor of foreign news. Chambers edited the way he had at *The New Masses*, but now in the service of the anti-Communist cause as he understood it. He still saw the world as conspiratorial, with Manichaean forces at work. He still saw his own role as subversive, and harbored secrets. He still substituted dogma for empirical details, using virtually none of the dispatches from reporters in the field; he wrote everything himself, drawing his source material from "fanatic right-wing magazines," according to Thomas Griffith, a veteran *Time* writer who himself eventually became foreign-news editor. Griffith later wrote that Chambers divided his colleagues "into two categories: knaves (serving the Communist enemy) and fools (I think he charitably considered me only a fool)." Among those whom Chambers lumped in the knave category were Theodore H. White, the correspondent in China, and John Hershey, the correspondent in Moscow. Luce was personally close to both, but he allowed Chambers to drive them from the magazine. The foreign-news reporters soon revolted against Chambers' heavy hand, and he was moved to special projects. The restrained Griffith called him "a well-poisoner."

In 1947, in the early days of the Cold War, the Republicans, in control of Congress for the first time since 1930, pushed for investigations aimed at proving the subversiveness of the New Deal and at undermining President Truman. The method of the House Committee on Un-American Activities was to get witnesses to name others—in effect, to out them. One former Communist, Elizabeth Bentley, named many names of Communist spies without corroboration, but she told the committee that some of her story could be confirmed by a certain editor at *Time*. In 1948, Chambers was subpoenaed to testify, and for the next two years the country was fix-

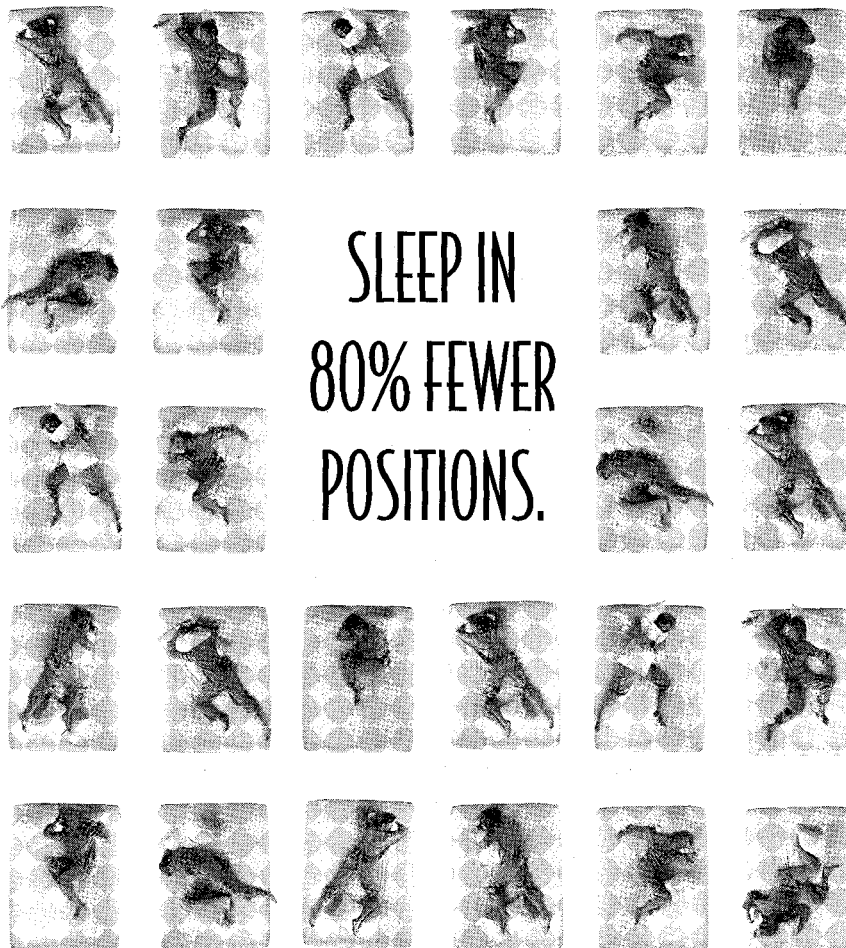


ated on the hearings and the trials involving his accusations against Alger Hiss.

**T**HE relationship between Chambers and Hiss remains enigmatic. Hiss was more than the highlights of his glittering résumé: law clerk to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, State Department official, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. When Chambers claimed to have met him, through the Comintern espionage network, in the nineteen-thirties, Hiss was a tall, slim, graceful man, who wore elegant clothes and had the air of a natural aristocrat, though he was in fact a scholarship boy from a shabby-genteel Baltimore family.

Chambers presented himself as a reluctant witness against Hiss, and during the hearings he always spoke of him with affection, even infatuation. Nixon, in one of his first meetings with Chambers, brought along a sympathetic journalist, Bert Andrews, of the *Herald Tribune*, and at Nixon's urging Andrews asked Chambers if there was "something strange" in his relationship with Hiss. Was he, or were the two of them, homosexual? "I know all those stories. There is just nothing to them," Chambers lied, but he later admitted his own homosexuality to the F.B.I. To the committee, Chambers described Hiss as "a man of great simplicity, with a great gentleness and sweetness of character." Almost all Chambers' stories about him were of the small kindnesses that Hiss had extended to him and his wife. Chambers depicted himself as a supplicant, a cadger unable to provide for his family, while Alger and Priscilla Hiss were described as beneficent. In one hearing, Chambers, choking back tears, declared, "We were close friends, but we are caught in a tragedy of history. Mr. Hiss represents the concealed enemy against which we are all fighting, and I am fighting."

Toward the end of the hearings, after Chambers gave Nixon microfilms of the Pumpkin Papers—the government documents that he said Hiss had stolen—he spent the night at his mother's house, in Lynbrook. He wrote a suicide note there, explaining that, while he had told the truth, he had never tried to harm Hiss, and that by "removing myself as witness,"

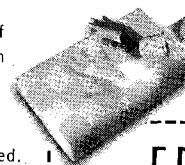


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through "self-execution," he would save them both. He tried to kill himself by an elaborate method involving rat poison, but he only vomited. His mother upbraided him and sent him back to the hearings. The incident remained a secret for several years, until Chambers himself revealed it.

In 1950, after Hiss was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison, Chambers retired to his Maryland farm with his dutiful wife, but he had political momentum and a public persona. He cozied up to Senator Joseph McCarthy (although he later came to distrust him), and made a series of false accusations. He smeared, among others, O. Edmund Clubb, then in charge of the State Department's China desk, as a Communist spy. Clubb lost his post and was dragged before the Un-American Activities Committee; by the time he was cleared, two years later, his career was wrecked. The purge of sophisticated Asia experts from the State Department made realistic assessments impossible. Clubb's removal made way for the rise of the dogmatic, abstract Dean Rusk, who eventually became Secretary of State. Vietnam lay in the future, but a seed of tragedy had been planted.

Just when the hunt for Communists in the government was at its most furious, an intense hunt for homosexuals in the government was mounted, with sexual perversion described in the same terms as the political variety, a practice chronicled by the historian John D'Emilio, in his 1989 essay "The Homosexual Menace." In 1950, Republican senators charged that the Truman Administration was rife with homosexuals. "One homosexual can pollute a Government office," a Senate committee declared in a terrifying report on "homosexuals and other moral pervers." One of President Eisenhower's first executive orders made homosexuality grounds for disbarment from federal employment. The mandatory sexual screening of millions paralleled the screening for loyalty. National security was believed to be at stake in both spheres.

Chambers was now a hero of Cold War conservatism, venerated on the right as a living martyr. He appeared as the indispensable "Witness"—the



word that became the title of his 1952 book, composed in unrelievedly purple, galvanic prose. Chambers described Communism in phrases commonly used then to describe homosexuality, and cast his struggle as a transformation into "a complete man," who had acquired "the power of overcoming myself." The true legacy of this self-divided man is that he helped to transmute an external threat into a moral panic, and to encourage a new generation of Cold War conservatives to do the same. He and a pantheon of anti-Communists for whom conservatism was the ultimate closet—J. Edgar Hoover, Roy Cohn, and Francis Cardinal Spellman—advanced a politics based on the themes of betrayal and exposure, "filth" (as Hoover called it) and purity. Since the end of the Cold War, this conservative anti-Communism has become an anachronism. What endures is the fear of the

enemy within: the homosexual menace.

After the publication of "Witness," Chambers was befriended by the young William F. Buckley, Jr., whose *National Review* was launched in 1955. *National Review*, unlike any previous right-wing magazine, resembled a left-wing journal of opinion. Many of its editors were, in fact, ex-Communists and ex-Trotskyists, with the well-spoken Ivy League figure kept out front. Buckley turned to Chambers as to a sage. Chambers, in rapidly declining health, began to mellow. He urged conservatives to accept a government role in stabilizing the economy, and even expressed interest in the Beats, which was perhaps the last gesture of his old, secret self. But until he died, in 1960, Chambers feared that he had abandoned "the winning side for the losing side." He had felt the pull of secret forbidden worlds, and knew just how hard it was to resist them. ♦

## EX LIBRIS

*A love letter written to reading.*

BY GEORGE STEINER

THE mere fact that you are reading this review shows that you belong, however casually, to the book world. We forget how limited that world is, in space, in historical time—how specialized an act reading is. Much the greater portion of mankind has belonged to cultures of orality, of the spoken word. They are far more ancient than



*Alberto Manguel*

those of writing and reading. Definitions of basic literacy are themselves in dispute; but even today reading skills among hundreds of millions remain rudimentary. The outward literacies of the privileged, industrially developed West are deceptive. Numerous men and women read only for immediate utilitarian ends, or, perhaps, one book a year. The range of

habits that separate the obsessive reader, the book-possessed, for whom, as Flaubert said, reading is life, from the men or women who decipher a tabloid headline or glance at the comics is immense. Tens of millennia precede the book, and may follow it. Ritual inscriptions, commercial labels, and pictographs may reach back to the fourth millennium B.C. But the means and acts of reading, as we take them for granted, come late. References in Plato point to the availability of philosophic texts in the form of rolls, which could be consulted should memory fail. Scholars differ when estimating how many men and women in ancient Athens could read more than inscriptions on public

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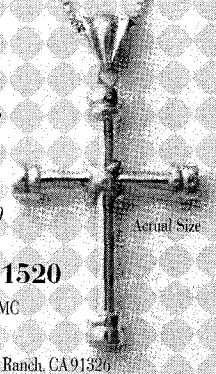
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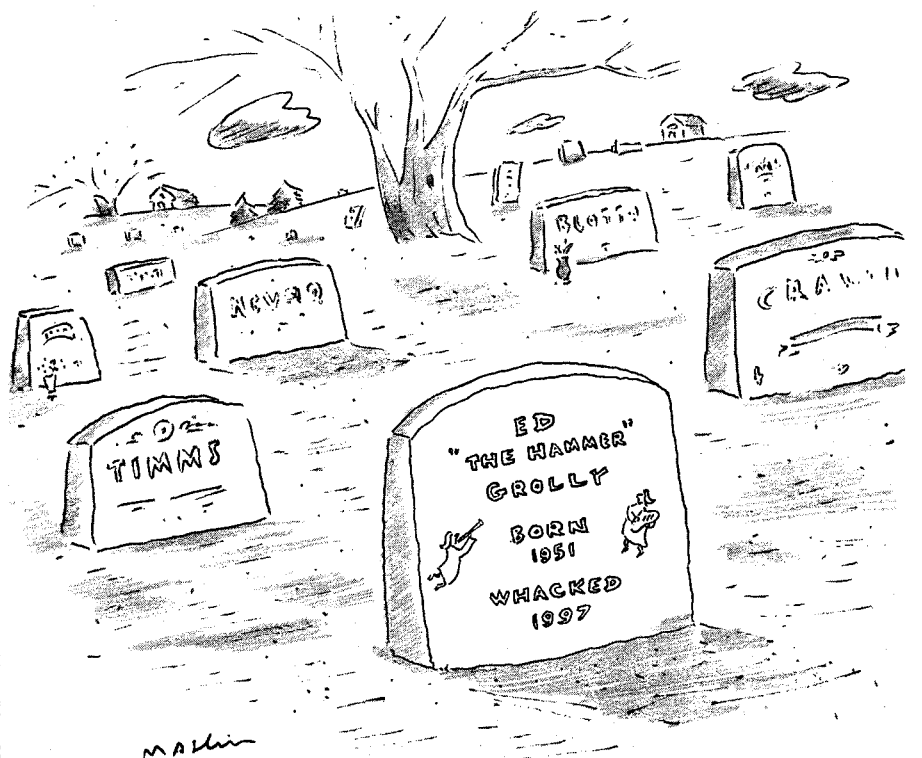
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monuments, or wished to do so. The celebrated anecdote in Augustine's "Confessions" that has his master, Ambrose of Milan, among the very first men able to read silently, without moving their lips, is now in doubt. Silent reading was certainly recorded earlier. But how many had mastered that skill? Homer's voluminous epics could be written down and made available to private readers only when treated papyrus or sufficient animal skins for parchment had become technically and economically accessible. To innumerable communities and languages, a written text remained exactly what the word "lithography" denotes: letters carved in rock or stone. It is only with Hellenistic Alexandria and its celebrated library that the life of the book as we have experienced it is deployed in Western consciousness. Whether this life will persist much longer is, today, a fascinating question.

And it is precisely the uncertainties surrounding the book in its classical format which have, over the past decades, generated intense scholarly interest in the history of reading. The systematic study of the development of private and public libraries, of printing and bookselling, of censorship and the economics of literature has produced a major body of knowledge and insight, particularly in France, where archives are extensive. We now know more about how texts were set down and read in an-

cient Greece and Rome, in medieval Paris, in Renaissance Venice, in the intellectual centers of the Enlightenment than ever before. The privileged coincidence between literary-historical excellence (Dickens, Carlyle, Macaulay) and best-sellerdom in the Victorian age, the seminal role of the small and semi-private presses in modernist movements, samizdat or clandestine distribution of forbidden works under the ancien régime and Soviet despotism, the explosive story of the pocket book and paperback—all these have been explored. At present, scholars of social history and gender are turning to such elusive questions as that of the accessibility of books to women in, say, the Middle Ages or the seventeenth century. Inquiry into the reading habits of children and into book illustration has given rise to busy fields. As the enigmatic author of Ecclesiastes might phrase it, "Of making many books about books there is no end."

Now we have Alberto Manguel's "A History of Reading" (Viking; \$26.95). Manguel belongs only marginally to this mandarin hive. He is a passionate bibliophile, collector, connoisseur of literary fantasy, erotica, and gay literature. He is a polyglot anthologist and translator, whose Buenos Aires origins relate him, deliberately, to the universal bookishness of Borges. He is at home amid the bookstalls of London and Paris. But he remains, in





the proper, etymological sense of the word, an "amateur," a lover rather than a specialist or a technician. His rhythm is leisurely and erratic. He browses lovingly among sources and motifs. The illustrations for this "History of Reading" have been chosen with an eye to surprise and contentment. Even where it enlists recent learning, Manguel's ramble retains the quizzical charm, the wholly personal, often autobiographical savor of those book collectors' memoirs numerous at the turn of the century. Kipling, Stevenson, Henry James are for Manguel, as they were for Borges, familiar presences and accomplices in "that unpunished vice" (the definition of reading offered by Valéry Larbaud, another bookman-translator of rare finesse).

Chapters succeed each other as in a gentle maze. We pass from somewhat loose dicta on the social universality of reading—an axiom sustainable only if we give to "reading" an almost shapeless sense—to an outsider's look at the psychology or neurophysiology of the act of reading by eye and brain. A consideration of silent reading is followed by a section on the arts of memory, on the capacity of books to preserve—most notably if we commit them to exact recollection—what would otherwise enter oblivion. A poignant anecdote—Manguel is first and foremost a raconteur—sums up the case. Soon to be murdered in the Nazi camp at Sachsenhausen, a famous scholar, who knew many classics by heart, "offered himself as a library to be read to his fellow inmates," Manguel writes. "I imagined the old man in that murky, relentless, hopeless place, approached with a request for Virgil or Euripides, opening himself up to a given page and reciting the ancient words for his bookless readers." This is in fact the way many of Mandelstam's poems were preserved and handed on under Stalinist terror.

The chapter on learning to read also contains illuminating anecdotes, especially with regard to differences between boys and girls in premodern communities. One is haunted by a photograph of Helen Keller sitting by a window and passing her hands over Braille. An excursus on Kafka's childhood reading takes us to the fascinating interactions between picture and text, to the "reading" of stained-glass images and statuary by medieval illiterates unable to decode the Scriptures as such. Today, the

comic book, television, mass-market advertising are reverting to this sub- or iconic literacy. Increasingly, language is caption. Moreover, as Manguel reminds us, printing in the West derives immediately from illustration. It was the woodcut blocks used for reproducing pictures which inspired Gutenberg's experiments in the cutting of reusable type during the late fourteen-forties and early fourteen-fifties. Soon printed books could take on private, portable formats. It was a crowded, varied, but logical step from Gutenberg to the launching, on July 30, 1935, of the first ten Penguins, at, magically, sixpence a volume.

After diverse distractions—images of reading in Whitman, in Proust, in Colette—Alberto Manguel shifts into reverse: back to papyrus rolls and the foundation of the first great libraries in the Hellenistic world. The library at Alexandria was reputed to contain almost half a million rolls; forty thousand more were kept in an annex attached to the Temple of Serapis. Out of the fertile mud of the Nile came the attendant fauna of librarians, grammarians, editors, and book reviewers.

A brief meditation on the stealing of books is mournfully vivid. One quote alone is worth the price of admission. It derives from the monastery library of San Pedro in Barcelona:

For him that steals, or borrows and returns not, a book from its owner, let it change into a serpent in his hand and rend him. Let him be struck with palsy, and all his members blasted. Let him languish in pain crying aloud for mercy, and let there be no surcease to his agony till he sing in dissolution. Let bookworms gnaw at his entrails in token of the Worm that dieth not. And when at last he goes to his final punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him for ever.

To which every victim of such depredations shall breathe "Amen."

A wholly irrelevant causerie on Rilke as translator leads to "forbidden reading" and an epilogue on the open-ended, blessedly interminable nature of the matter of books. The spirit roams forever in Borges's library at Babel, whose boundless labyrinths house all possible books, including those lost, those yet to come, and those never to be written. For human life is also, and emphatically, the Book of Life.

Manguel is a generous companion, and it would be churlish to bridle at various inaccuracies. What is troubling is his

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blithe unawareness of or indifference to the difficulties raised by his theme. There may never have been a higher master of language and text than Plato, whose critique of reading has lost nothing of its unnerving force. Books lead to the erosion of human memory, which is the storehouse of our being and the font of knowledge and creative imagining. Written, printed discourse takes on a wholly spurious authority. Inevitably, it lays claim to fixed, proved truths, when the elicitation of such truths ought, at all times, to be a dynamic, provisional, self-correcting process. Worst of all: a book is not answerable to immediate challenge, to questioning, as is an oral interlocutor in live dialogue. The reader cannot answer back in querying immediacy and demand for clarification. For Wordsworth, "one impulse from a vernal wood" outweighed the secondary, parasitic fabric of book learning, of library dust. Even more radically, the heirs to Tolstoy's anarchist fundamentalism held a complete Shakespeare or Pushkin to be of far less benefit to men and women than a pair of sound shoes. The book burners (the theoretical ones, at least) have not always been totalitarian thugs. There *is* an adversarial case that, time and again, requires rebuttal.

Does the book, as we have known it, have a future? The Gutenberg revolution accelerated, made less costly, and immensely multiplied the production of written texts. It did not, fundamentally, transform the nature of the relations between writer, reader, and book. The electronic revolution now in progress will, on the other hand, generate mutations in every aspect of writing and reading—indeed, in the fabric of meaning itself. CD-ROM, the Internet, the miniaturization on microchips of whole libraries, immediate access to vast bibliographies, the as yet incalculable facilities offered by virtual reality are set to dwarf the impact of movable type. Already the humble word processor permits the recomposition of any text or the collage of any set of texts in willed superposition and cross-reference. Books can now be written, edited, produced, and published across the Internet from home. The fundamentals of the relationship between text and image are being altered. The conception of the planet as a living book, as a single storehouse of information, record, entertainment, rhetorical argument—each special domain interrelated with all oth-

ers via electronic synapses of recognition, classification, and translation (as in the human brain?)—is no longer a science-fiction fantastification.

To a large extent, the socioeconomic conditions of the classic act of reading—Erasmus, Montaigne, Jefferson in their private libraries—no longer obtain, or obtain only in the artifice of the academic. Already the silences, the arts of concentration and memorization, the luxuries of time on which "high reading" depended are largely dispersed. Paperbacks do not make libraries. Yet even these erosions, together with the crisis in the teaching of the liberal arts and ancient languages that underwrote Western literacy, are nearly insignificant compared with the brave new world of the electronic. It may well be that we are already witnessing early symptoms of this transmutation in the actual practice of literature. Forms with strong roots in orality, such as poetry and drama, are formidably vital. The traditional novel, with its essential reliance on the written word, on silent reading, on a middle-class sense of narrative rationality and resolution (as in tonal music), has declined, to a considerable degree, into packaged conventionality. It is not only, as postmodernism proclaims, "the end of the great stories": it is the radical change in the means whereby these were told and taken in.

Books do continue to be produced and published in large numbers. Handwritten illuminated manuscripts continued to be produced well after Gutenberg. Periods of transition are difficult to make out. They are also intensely stimulating. One can intuit deep-lying seismic shocks affecting our cultural perceptions of time, of individual death. These will put in question the claims of literature, of written thought, to individual glory, to survival "for all ages." Milton held a good book to be the "lifeblood of a master spirit." Doubtless this precious liquor will continue to flow, but, perhaps, in altogether different channels and test tubes. The boys and girls at their computer keyboards, finding, stumbling onto insights in logic, in fractals, may neither read nor write in any "book sense." Are they illiterate? ♦

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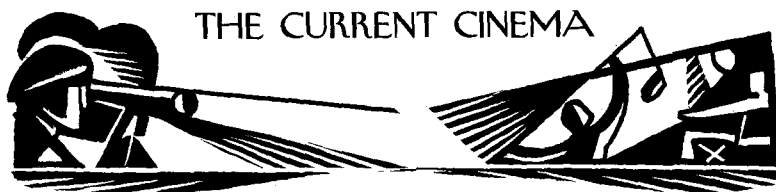
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

## BLOOD BUDDIES

Male bonding, brutal and sweet, in "Donnie Brasco" and "The Eighth Day."

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE most beautiful thing about "Donnie Brasco" is the opening credit sequence. That seems to be the fashion these days: think of "Mars Attacks!", or the violated-violin sounds at the beginning of "Seven," or, best of all, the thumping credits of "Mission: Impossible," which were so tense and sexy that you could leave the theatre immediately afterward without having to suffer the letdown of the film itself. There isn't such a bang to the start of "Donnie Brasco," but it grabs you nonetheless: the director, Mike Newell, shifts and shuffles a roster of his main players in haunted monochrome stills.

First up is a pair of eyes—sad and sunken, full of a life that has somehow passed them by. They could belong only to one man, and the appearance of the words "Al Pacino" alongside feels utterly redundant. No one has had eyes like that, not since El Greco stopped painting saints.

Pacino plays Lefty Ruggiero—a hoodlum, but not a very good hoodlum. Michael Corleone would have taken one look and fed him to the lobsters. Lefty has the aggrieved twitch of a man who has, as he says, "twenty-six fucking hits under my belt" but nothing to show for it; whenever a Mafia boss rolls up, Lefty hovers like a schoolboy in front of a baseball star. Worse still, the next gen-

eration of thugs is ready to overtake him. He has to stand and watch while a brawler like Sonny (Michael Madsen) bullies his way to the top. Then there's Donnie Brasco (Johnny Depp), a crooked jeweller whom Lefty spies in a bar and takes under his wing. You think at first that Donnie is a rerun of Ray Liotta's Henry, in "GoodFellas"—the naïve outsider who learns not just to play by the rules of the Mob but to love the whole crummy game. In this case, however, the means and motives are all snarled up, for Donnie is in fact an F.B.I. agent, working so deeply under cover that he forgets to

come up for air. His marriage to Maggie (Anne Heche) turns violent and vacuous, but he himself prospers among his newfound buddies, becoming a kind of surrogate son to the lonely Lefty. Their affection may be genuine, but that makes it all the more likely to blow up in their faces: if Donnie ever divulges his true calling, then Lefty, the one who brought him on, will die.

Set in 1978, the movie was written by Paul Attanasio, who lent such shape and purpose to "Quiz Show," and who even managed to conjure the illusion that "Disclosure" might have been well written in the first place. Here he is lumbered with the equally troublesome task of freshening up a genre that feels



Unwise guys: Johnny Depp and Al Pacino.

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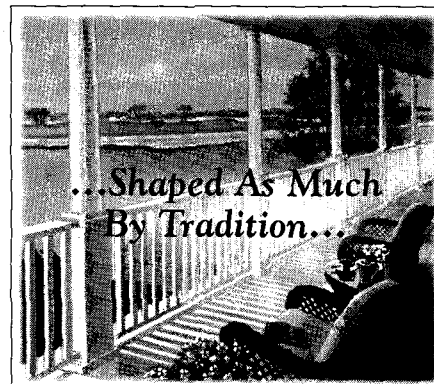
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stale and crusty; how on earth can anyone make mobsters speak like living creatures again? What Attanasio does is to look at them askance, phrasing the tough talk of Lefty and Sonny so that it loses its traditional ring of threat and fright, and sounds more like the brag of little people who want to grow big. "In all the five boroughs, I'm known," Lefty says. "I'm known all over the fucking world. Anybody—ask anybody about Lefty from Mulberry Street." Attanasio is onto something here: he taps into the pathetic comedy that leaks from the rhetoric of criminals—of movie criminals, that is, although there are bound to be real criminals whose tragic ambition is to sound just like the movies. Both Lefty and Donnie, in their own seedy ways, follow the pattern set by Charles Van Doren in "Quiz Show": they obey the Attanasio principle that character is all crevices and cracks—a series of farcical gaps that open up between what a man is and the manner in which he announces himself to the world.

The problem with "Donnie Brasco" is that Mike Newell seems to be making a different picture from the one that Attanasio wrote. Newell doesn't see anything funny in wise guys; I have an awful feeling that he may even think of them as slightly wise. At one point, a boss climbs out of a limo in a pin-striped suit and shades, chewing on a cigar the size of a baguette, and as a flunky drapes a camel-hair coat around the man's shoulders you think, Oh, *please*—leave it out, or have the grace to play it for laughs. Newell is like Donnie; he may have wanted to trap these goons, but he winds up singing their sorry tune, or at least backing it with the strings and woodwinds in Patrick Doyle's score. And then, when the mournfulness runs dry, "Donnie Brasco" turns brutal. There is nothing wrong with such a mixture, of course; "Once Upon a Time in America" used it to crushing effect, al-

though Leone's movie felt like the culmination not simply of a career but of a long tradition of cinematic mood. What's more, the savagery itself was melancholic—not tacked on for good measure or shock value but pursued with resignation, as if to end another's life were to prefigure the close of one's own. By those standards, "Donnie Brasco" is thin fare, and there's a flash of panic in the way it swivels into violence. Late in the story, without warning, we get a multiple shooting, an axe between the shoulder blades, and, for the benefit of those planning to eat ribs after the show, a shot of someone's leg being sawed off.

The more extreme the film becomes, the more ordinary it appears, and whether you warm to it depends largely on whether you buy the idea of Johnny Depp as an F.B.I. agent, let alone a father of three. It also puts a kink in the oeuvre of Mike Newell, best known for "Four Weddings and a Funeral." You can't help wondering how his previous characters would have fared at the hands of Lefty Ruggiero. A swing



of the axe would have been just the thing to snap those dreary pleasure seekers in "Enchanted April" out of their siestas. And dear Hugh Grant would have been frightfully embarrassed if you had asked him to remove a chap's leg below the knee. Newell tends to be an efficient scene setter, and his eye for place and period kept "Dance with a Stranger" and "Into the West" nicely tethered; all of which makes it disappointing that "Donnie Brasco" should offer so halfhearted a vision of the seventies. A burst of Blondie, a snatch of E.L.O., and that's about it: none of the garishness and the nuclear sideburns, for example, with which Brian De Palma embellished his own Pacino crime saga, "Carlito's Way." The finest moment in Newell's film comes at the climax (if you can call it a climax), when Lefty takes off his wristwatch and

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other valuables, leaves them in a drawer where they will be found, and slips out quietly to meet his certain fate. You catch a Chekhovian perfection in his fuss and care, but there's more to it than that: I like to think that Al Pacino is saying farewell to this particular neighborhood of the movies. Not even he can stay married to the Mob forever.

**I**N 1991, the young Belgian director Jaco Van Dormael made his debut with "Toto the Hero," which was so good that I worried whether he could ever match it. (If it's any consolation, Orson Welles had the same problem.) Van Dormael's new movie, "The Eighth Day," is a two-hander, and it strains unceasingly to clasp those hands together. Harry (Daniel Auteuil) is a successful salesman who teaches other salesmen to practice their sincerity. This is a blatant setup: one of the golden rules of cinema states that he who begins by faking warmth will in due course find the real thing. In Harry's case, the warm front arrives in the form of Georges (Pascal Duquenne), a young man with Down's syndrome, whom Harry meets on a rainy road at night. From here on, Georges amuses, tests, and infuriates the forlorn Harry into loving him. By the end, Harry is a changed man—a happy hobo, sprung from his bourgeois cage.

It's hard not to feel queasy about the dramatic implications of "The Eighth Day"—the way it suggests that the *raison d'être* of the mentally disabled is to revivify those who consider themselves sound of mind. Such gentle condescension rendered "Rain Man" almost unwatchable, and if Van Dormael's work advances beyond that wretched picture it's because he casts Duquenne, who himself has Down's syndrome, in the role of Georges. There are frightening surges of authentic distress here, and patches of lush fantasy as we tour the landscape of Georges's imagination, and yet the movie falls flat. Where "Toto the Hero" was rousing but also vastly intricate, "The Eighth Day" pursues a single line of emotional inquiry: How can Georges and Harry bring each other joy? I thought that Van Dormael was so clear and unforced a surrealist that nothing could dent his skills, but I had reckoned without the power of sentimentality. Like love, it conquers all. ♦

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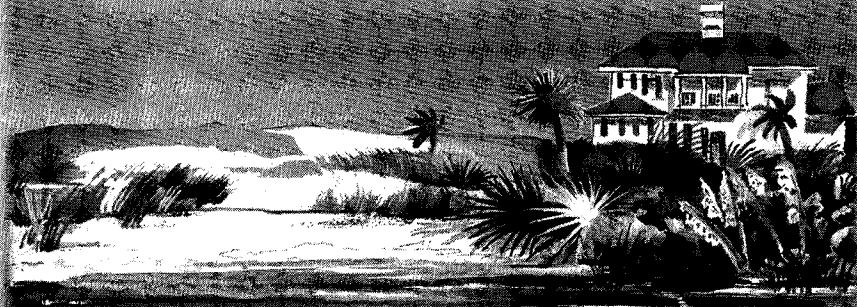
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## LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO ABS

BY FRANK GANNON

Infomercials disguised as actual programming are becoming more and more subtle.  
—Associated Press.

SCENE: *Night. An American-Victorian living room. Some lamps are on, but the atmosphere is one of subtle yet unrelenting gloom. It is a room that has seen a great deal of old-fashioned Irish-American emoting: silent suffering and suffering out loud. Enter JAMIE and EDMUND, drinks in hand. Their manner suggests an impending moment of clarity after years of alcohol abuse.*

JAMIE: I've been wise to Mama a lot longer than you. I'll never forget when I first found out. Caught her with a hypo. Jesus, I always thought that only whores took dope. And then you had to go and get consumption. We've been more than just brothers. *(He drinks.)* You're the only real pal I've ever had.

EDMUND: I know that. *(Drinks.)*

JAMIE: You know, Papa is old and he can't last much longer. If you were to die, Mama and I would get everything he's got, so you probably think I'm hoping—

EDMUND: Shut up, you damn fool!

JAMIE: Be realistic for once in your damn romantic life!

*(Pause.)*

EDMUND: I'm sorry. We're all in bad shape. We're haunted.

JAMIE: Let me ask you something.

EDMUND: Wha? *(Drinks.)*

JAMIE: Can you spare twenty minutes a day?

EDMUND: What are you talking about?

JAMIE: I'm talking about twenty minutes a day. Twenty minutes a day in the comfort of your own home.

EDMUND: Well, I guess everybody has twenty minutes a day. *(Sighs.)*

JAMIE: Twenty minutes a day . . . to a new you.

EDMUND: That's a good one. A new me! *(Drinks.)*

*(TYRONE enters. He is sixty-five but carries himself like a much younger father.)*

TYRONE: Oh, both of you here. Tired of your filth and your whores?

JAMIE: They give me more than I ever got here!

TYRONE: Why don't you go back to them, the two of you. My heirs! My name—what a waste! Two drunks, and me a wreck! Done and finished!

EDMUND: You're the one to talk. Your



money is more precious to you than your own flesh and blood.

TYRONE: I'll not hear this. It's just the drink talking and that blasted Swinburne. *(Mincingly.)* Oh, Algernon!

JAMIE: Speaking about money. I'm asking you, as your older son, do you have three easy payments of \$59.95?

TYRONE: Did you say \$59.95?

JAMIE: Yes, for God's sake. Three easy payments of \$59.95.

EDMUND: Easy? Nothing is easy. *(Drinks.)*

JAMIE: This is. And consider what you get.

EDMUND: What do you get, besides a slow walk to the grave?

JAMIE: What do you get? A complete

aerobic workout—a systemic workout of all the major muscle groups!

TYRONE: Where do you get that—from your godless, blasphemous dirty books? From your dirty two-bit whores?

JAMIE: No. It's available right now from one of the nation's oldest and most trusted names in personal fitness.

EDMUND: But what about someone like me? I'd like to get into shape, but I'm dying of consumption.

JAMIE: Look at me. I spend at least fifty hours a week drinking and having meaningless sex with whores. Yet with the Fitness Plus plan, I can get drunk, have oral and regular sex with prostitutes, and still have time to get a whole-body workout.

TYRONE: Wow, that is convenient!

JAMIE: And even if you're spending four or five hours coughing up blood, Edmund, the Fitness Plus plan can fit right into your life style.

*(They freeze as a Chopin waltz starts up on a player piano. The music stops as MARY appears in the doorway, wearing an old nightgown. Her hair is loose, and a strip of rubber tubing still encircles one arm. She stares straight ahead, oblivious.)*

JAMIE *(in low horror)*: Oh, my God! Enter Ophelia.

EDMUND: Enter Needle Nellie.

TYRONE: She's far gone.

JAMIE: Not too far. Mom? Can I talk to you?

*(MARY stops and turns.)*

MARY: I'm missing something—when will I find it?

JAMIE: Within two weeks, Mom! When you try the Fitness Plus plan—well, you'll get hooked on it!

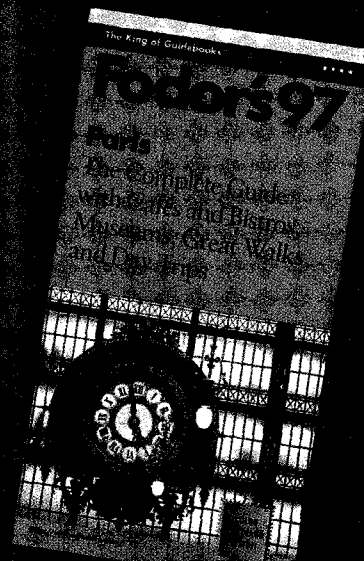
*(They all laugh hollowly.)*

CURTAIN

*(The preceding was a paid program expressing the views of Eugene O'Neill and Fitness Plus Systems.) ♦*



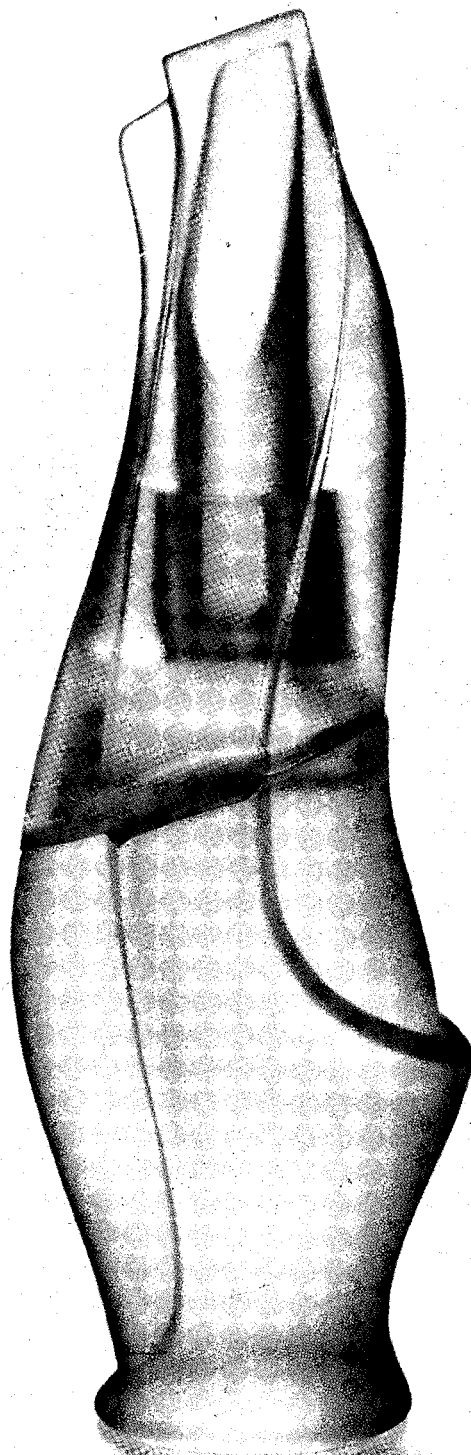
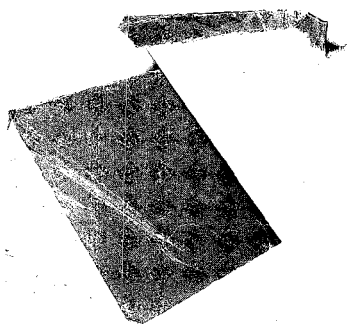
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